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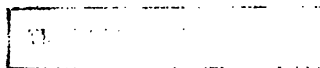
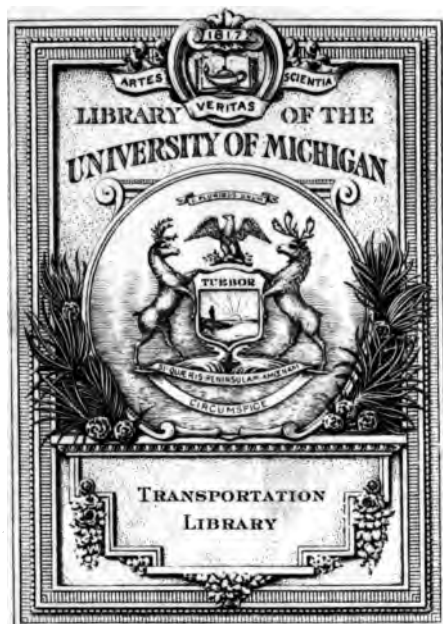
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A HISTORY
OF THE
RAILWAY MAIL SERVICE,

TOGETHER WITH A

Brief account of the Origin and Growth of the
Postoffice Service and a Sketch showing
the Daily Life of a Railway Mail
Clerk.

PUBLISHED BY THE
COLUMBIAN CORRESPONDENCE COLLEGE,
WASHINGTON, D. C.

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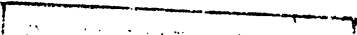
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PREFACE.

The growing importance of the Postoffice Service and the large number of persons employed under it, including the Railway Mail, makes it an interesting study for almost anyone, but especially for those who desire or have already secured positions in the government service. It has been quite difficult for anyone to secure a concise history of this branch of the government service, which has grown to such enormous proportions, and for this reason we have had this book compiled. Herein will be found a history of the growth of the Postoffice Department, beginning in early times in England, and tracing it down in this country to the present day. A history also of the Railway Mail Service is given at considerable length, in order to be most helpful to those who wish to enter the Railway Mail Service. We have had the experience of a railway mail clerk written from the time he entered the service as a substitute until he became a proficient clerk, having charge of a car. This clerk was afterwards promoted to the Postoffice Department in this city, where he holds a position at the time of this writing. We believe a careful perusal of this book will be of great advantage to those who are interested in this line of work.

COLUMBIAN CORRESPONDENCE COLLEGE.

January 1, 1903.



PART I.

THE POSTOFFICE FROM THE BEGINNING.

PART II.

ORIGIN AND GROWTH OF THE RAILWAY MAIL SERVICE.

PART III.

DAILY LIFE OF A RAILWAY MAIL CLERK.

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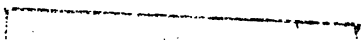
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PART I.

THE POSTOFFICE FROM THE BEGINNING.

CHAPTER I.

THE WORLD WITHOUT THE POSTOFFICE.

The postoffice is the most potent governmental agency of the modern world; the railway mail service is the right arm of the postoffice. Through the postoffice the government comes into immediate contact with the people. Indeed, it affords the only evidence of the existence of the general government for thousands,—perhaps millions of our people. It brings distant towns, cities, and country neighborhoods, into immediate business and friendly relations; it puts the people of even remote sections in touch with the best thought of the day; it makes possible cheap literature of the best quality, and exercises a wholesome supervision over the character of all that passes through its hands; it places on the frontiersman's table, the discourse of the minister, the speech of the statesman, the treatise of the scientist, and the effusion of the poet while yet these productions are the talk of the great cities; it promotes a better understanding between the people of different communities, and makes for peace and concord among the nations; it gladdens the fireside with news from the absent one, and no part of the civilized world is too remote for its beneficent influence.

Robbed of the postoffice and the agencies which contribute to its efficiency, a deep silence would fall upon the world, and every family would feel a bereavement almost as when the eldest sons were taken from the mothers of old Egypt. News would travel only by the uncer-

tain method of private carriers, or by the still more uncertain travelers that would pass at long intervals, between distant parts of the country, or from one country to another. Such was the condition of the world before the establishment of the postoffice, which many will be surprised to know is a modern institution.

We must turn to England for the origin of that public agency for transmission of private correspondence, which we call the postoffice. We can faintly surmise that in every age since the art of writing became known, the king's messengers were in some instances charged with the delivery of private communications. In many cases this was doubtless done by stealth, and may have constituted a liberal portion of the carriers perquisites. The next step would be for the officials to connive at this sort of thing, thus allowing and tacitly approving of a violation of law, which was fraught with so much good for the people, and which could be so easily supervised for the exclusion of treasonable correspondence, the great enemy of every ancient state. This would bring us within one step of the postoffice, for as soon as the state countenanced the carrying of private correspondence by public messengers, and accepted pay for the same, the germ of the modern postoffice system had been evolved, and it is a striking instance of how close mankind may stand to a great discovery for a long period of time without actually making the discovery.

The great civilized states of the ancient world, Greece and Rome, which trusted the people, and whose greatness was dependent upon the people's intelligence, seemingly had no better facilities for the communication of intelligence than the despotisms which have in every age feared nothing else so much as popular enlightenment. Along the main lines of commerce, doubtless letters were conveyed by private enterprise, ships, caravans, etc., long before the companies of merchants appeared, who were in the Middle Ages allowed to carry mail in some countries. But these means reached only the centres of trade and population. These were threads of light running through the vast zone of darkness; voices heard in the deep silence which overhung the world. Families mov-

ing from one part of the country to another, were lost to their kin as if the earth had swallowed them. Sons leaving home were tearfully given over to the goddess of silence and mystery until mayhap they should return. If one were a hundred miles from home he might as well have been on the planet Mars, as far as getting word from his loved ones, or sending them news of his welfare were concerned. If sick, he was beyond the reach of help from those who would gladly have given it and if arrested on suspicion, he had no choice but endure the dungeon, because those who knew him were beyond his reach.

OPPOSED BY GOVERNMENTS.

Instead of seeking to promote the transmission of intelligence, governments sought by every means in their power to retard it. Sometimes permission granted to companies of merchants to send their own letters by their own messengers, were arbitrarily revoked by the king, to the great injury of commerce. The king was engaged in the not too easy task of staying on his throne, and the thought that correspondence between the subjects might have a legitimate purpose, seldom entered the uneasy head that wore the crown. If a man wanted to write to another, it must necessarily mean treason. So all letters were subject to the scrutiny of the king's officers, whether going by public or private carrier, but we may be sure they were thankfully received, however close the gauntlet they were required to run. Families immigrating to America in early times may have been lost at sea, or may have lived to populate one or more countries, so far as the friends at home were aware, for news seldom passed between the cabin in the solitude of the American forest and the isolated neighborhoods in the rural districts of England or Ireland. We can only faintly conceive of the sacrifices made by families which moved westward in the vanguard of the white race in the settlement of this continent. Of the countless dangers of the forest we have had many thrilling chapters—dangers which their hearts were brave to meet and their hands strong to

overcome—but the life-long separation of those near and dear to them, the heavy silence of the years, the secrets of life and death held fast by the trackless wilderness, the heartaches, the hunger—these things are not related for news—in the chronicles of the western wilds. To those who are accustomed to pursue the daily records of the world's events, it would seem that the desire for news of the outside world must have been akin to the longing for light, experienced by explorers during the long Arctic night, and we can imagine with what welcome the traveler, fresh from the old colonies, was hailed by the children of the backwoods.

The postoffice did not burst upon the scene like a carrier, waving his message; it was of painfully slow growth. It was regarded with suspicion by the powerful ones of the earth, and for a long time after it came to be tolerated, the privilege was farmed out to the highest bidder for the purpose of yielding the crown the largest possible revenue, without regard to the interests of the public, or indeed, without recognizing that the public had any right in the matter.

CHAPTER II.

ORIGIN OF THE POSTOFFICE.

Private letters in England of the fifteenth, and probably of the fourteenth, century, contain inscriptions showing that they were conveyed by horses and men maintained by the government and primarily entered for its special service. Long before this, however, the University of Paris had organized a postal service on its own account, which lasted until the year 1719, and in various parts of Europe mercantile guilds and brotherhoods were licensed to establish "posts" for mercantile purposes during the Middle Ages.

As early as the middle of the thirteenth century entries occur in the accounts of the English Kings, of payments to royal messengers for carrying letters to various parts of the kingdom. A superintendent of these messengers constituted the germ of the present office of postmaster general. The first postmaster general of whom any distinct record remains was Sir Brian Tuke, 1533. He seems to have been only a figurehead, however, for the postal business was governed by "orders in council," then and for many years afterward.

In 1556 it was ordered "that the postes betwene this and the Northe should eache of them keepe a booke, and make entrye of every lettre he shall receive, the tyme of the delivere thereof into his hands, with the parties names that shall bring it unto him."

Much of the business of the foreign postal service during the early years of Elizabeth's reign was carried on by the incorporated "Merchant Strangers," who had a postmaster of their own. In 1568 this postmastership became vacant, and a quarrel over the vacancy cost the company its privilege.

The accession of James I. led to some improvements in the postal service so far as it pertained to the carrying of the royal messages, owing to the frequent communications passing between London, the King's new capital, and Scotland, the native country.

In 1603 a royal order directed that the postmasters at the various stages should enjoy the privilege of letting horses to (1) "those riding in post, that is to say with horn and guide," (2) "that the lawful charge for the hire of such horses should be, for public messages, at the rate of 2 1-2 cents a mile, "besides the guides' groats." It was also directed that every postmaster should keep two horses for the express conveyance of public letters, and should forward such letters within a quarter of an hour of their receipt, and that posts should travel at the rate of not less than seven miles an hour in summer and five miles in winter.

1607 the King granted to James Stanhope, the first Lord Stanhope, and his son Charles, afterward the second Lord Stanhope, jointly and to the survivor of them, the postmastership of England under the title of "Master of the Posts and Messengers," with a fee of one hundred marks a year together with all "avails and profits" belonging to the office. This was in the same year as the settlement of Jamestown, the first English settlement in America. In 1619, the year before the settlement of New England, a new office known as the "Postmaster General of England for Foreign Parts," was enacted. It was at once regarded by Lord Stanhope, the existing postmaster general, as an infringement on his patent, which led to a lengthy dispute in the King's bench and before the Lords of the council. The dispute was much intensified by the growing jealousy toward foreign merchants. In 1626 permission was granted to merchants to send their letters by messengers of their own choosing, at their own expense, but this was revoked a year later except as to one company. The lax condition of everything pertaining to the postal service is shown by a complaint addressed to the privy council in 1628, by the Postmaster of England, that they had received no payments "ever since the last day of November, 1621, until this present time."

The first of a long line of reformers in the English postal service was Thomas Witherington, who became postmaster general in 1632. In submitting proposals to the King in 1635, he observed that "letters are now car-

ried by carriers or footposts, sixteen or eighteen miles a day, and it is fully two months before an answer can be received from Scotland or Ireland, to London. If any of His Majesty's subjects shall write to Madrid, in Spain, he shall receive answer sooner and surer than he shall out of Ireland." Under the new arrangement proposed by Witherington, postage was to be 2d. for under eighty miles; 4d. for between 80 and 140 miles; 6d. for above 140 miles, and 8d. to Scotland. At the same time it was ordered that thereafter no private messengers should carry mail.

The office of postmaster general was permanent and capable of assignment and had in fact been assigned from one time to another so often, each time with some irregularity, that in the time of Cromwell, there were no less than five claimants in the office. The postoffice was regarded from the first by those in authority, not as a useful agent of the people, but as a revenue producer, and the privilege was generally farmed out by the King for a lump sum. Henry Bishop, the first postmaster general after the restoration, contracted to pay the King a yearly rent of 21,500 pounds.

The Secretary of State was authorized to examine all letters passing through the mails, doubtless for the detection of treasonable correspondence.

In 1677 there were 182 postmasters in England and Scotland, and in Ireland 45 in the country, not including the eighteen officials of the Dublin postoffice. A writer in that year observes:

"The number of letters missive is now prodigiously great. A letter comprising a whole sheet of paper is now conveyed 80 miles for 2d. Every twenty-four hours the post goes 120 miles and in five days an answer may be had from a place 300 miles distant."

This surely was a long stride in advance of the sixteen or eighteen miles a day reported by Witherington, when he assumed office, but the world was about to witness a feat in the way of expediting the postal business which we have scarcely matched after a lapse of more than two centuries. In 1680 William Decker, a searcher in the custom house, and Robert Murray, a clerk in the excise of-

fice, conceived a plan for improving the mail service of London. They carried, registered and insured, for a penny, both letters and parcels, up to a pound in weight, and ten pounds in value. They established seven sorting and distributing offices, and between 400 and 500 receiving houses and wall boxes, established early collections, with a maximum of ten daily deliveries for the central part of the city, and six for the suburbs or outer parts of the city proper, while outlying villages had four. It will be observed that these young Napoleons, who suddenly sprung up to anticipate the work of ages, were not even in the regular postal service, and suit was finally brought against them by the postmaster general, who claimed that his exclusive patents for the privilege of carrying the mails was being infringed. The court sustained his claim, and the first penny post of the world was a thing of the past, but the names of its promoters should not be allowed to pass into oblivion.

The next event of importance in English postal history is the act of Queen Anne's reign, which consolidated the postoffices of the empire, Scotland and the colonies, having until this time had separate postoffices. This act, passed in 1711, organized the postoffice establishment substantially, as it continued until 1838, when the modern postal system was introduced. It provided three rates of postage, viz: English, 3d. for under eighty miles; 4d. if above eighty miles, and 6d. to Scotland or Ireland.

The chief obstacle to carrying the mail in England, as well as other countries, in the early days of postal history—next to the almost impassible roads,—was the swarms of robbers that infested the country districts. Nothing else was quite as ignoble as toil in those times, and a high degree of respectability belonged to the chivalrous road agent, whose deeds were recounted at the firesides until a halo of romance, partly fact and partly fable, was formed about him, to the delight, doubtless, of juvenile listeners, who burned to imitate his exploits. The poor, who had nothing to steal, regarded the highwayman as a friend, because he robbed the rich, and it is probable that a bright youth who looked for a path to success in

life was not seriously prevailed upon to eschew this open and easy path to honor. So habitual were the robberies of the post, that they came to be regarded by the officials as among the natural and necessary events of human life. They urged the public for its own protection the sending of bank notes and bills of exchange in halves, declaring, "There are no other means of preventing robberies with effect, as it is proved that the strongest carts that could be made, lined and bound with iron, were soon broken open by a robber."

The perils of the road are probably chargeable with the disrepute into which the postal service fell during the reign of Queen Anne. The great irregularity and uncertainty in the delivery of the mails led to a falling off in the revenues. Postal reformers fared very badly in England in early times, being regarded with suspicion by the authorities, and eventually coming to a bad end, like the villain in the play. It is comforting, therefore, to find a shining exception, in the person of John Palmer, a theatrical manager of Bath. He urged upon the government the building of coaches of a construction adapted for fast running, and the furnishing of ample supplies of fresh horses, with an armed guard on each coach. The officials of the postoffice as usual opposed the plan, insisting that the present arrangement was very close to perfection. The matter was finally brought to the attention of Lord Chatham, the prime minister, who insisted that Palmer's plan be given a trial, which was done, with the most gratifying results. The effect on the revenue for the next twenty-one years is shown by the advance from 196,000 pounds in 1784, to 944,000 pounds in 1805, and Palmer was rewarded, after many vicissitudes, with a pension of 3,000 pounds a year and a gift of 50,000 pounds.

THE MODERN POSTOFFICE.

What may be properly called the modern postoffice dates from the year 1837, the year, by the way, of the accession of Queen Victoria. The chief agent in the bringing about of this reform was Sir Rowland Hill,

whose name should be gratefully remembered, not only in his own country but throughout the civilized world. He began his reforms by publishing a pamphlet calling attention to the wretched state of the British postal service. This pamphlet, entitled "Postoffice Reform," was the first word in the persistent crusade by which this eminent reformer brought the slow-going British public to see the manifold evils under which this branch of the public service labored. He showed that for the previous twenty years the postal revenues of the empire had actually fallen off, whereas it should have shown an increase of 500,000 pounds a year in order to keep pace with the increase in population, and nearly four times that amount to keep pace with the increase in travel. At this time the rate of postage outside the city of London varied from 4d to 8d for a single sheet of paper not exceeding an ounce in weight. Hill proposed a uniform rate of a penny for each half ounce, which proposition was as usual hailed by the postoffice authorities as ruinous and mad. However, it was received with great favor by the public, especially the trading public. On the 10th of January, 1840, the penny post went into effect in the United Kingdom, and its effect in cheapening the rate and increasing the efficiency of the postal service of every county is the best evidence of its success, as well as the highest testimonial to the great public service of Sir Rowland Hill.

As Americans we are proud to claim that we have led the world in many of the improvements which have wrought the wondrous changes of the past century, but it must be owned by all fair inquirers that the postoffice is not one of the fields in which we have lighted up the way for the world. Indeed, we have sometimes plodded far behind. A notable instance is the railway postoffices or railway mail cars, in which distribution is made while the mail is en route. This, the greatest reform since the introduction of the railway, was adopted by our own Postoffice Department, as a new discovery, several years after the same had come into use in England, several years after the same in modified form had come into use in England.

CHAPTER III.

THE POSTOFFICE IN AMERICA.

The earliest official notice of the existence of the post-office in America is the following paragraph from the records of the general court of Massachusetts in 1639.

"It is ordered that notice be given that Richard Fairbanks his house in Boston is the place appointed for all letters which are brought from beyond the seas, or are to be sent thither to be left with him; and he is to take care that they are to be delivered or sent according to the directions; and he is allowed for every letter a penny, and must answer all miscarriages through his own neglect in this kind."

The same court, twenty-eight years later, was petitioned to make better postal arrangements, the petitioners alleging the frequent "loss of letters whereby merchants, especially with their friends and employers in foreign trades, are greatly damnified; many times the letters are thrown upon the Exchange so those who will may take them up, no person, without some satisfaction, being willing to trouble their houses therewith."

The postal service in Virginia was, if possible, even more primitive. A law passed in 1657 required every planter to provide a messenger to convey mail matter to the next plantation, and so on, on pain of forfeiting a hogshead of tobacco in default of doing so. In 1672 the government of New York established "a post to goe monthly from New York to Boston." The advertisement ran: Those that be disposed to send letters, to bring them to the Secretary's office, where in a lockt box, they shall be preserved until the messenger calls for them, all persons paying post before the box be sealed up." Thirty years later this monthly post had become a fortnightly one, as shown by the following paragraph in the "Boston News Letter."

"By order of the postmaster general of North America. These are to give notice that on Monday night,

the sixth of December, the western post between Boston and New York sets out once a fortnight, the three winter months of December, January and February, and go alternately from Boston to Saybrook and Hartford, to exchange the mayle of letters with the New York Ryder," etc.

The office of postmaster general for America was created in 1692, but it did not become an important factor in the postal affairs of the colonies until the appointment of Benjamin Franklin in 1753. This illustrious American was destined to be the last person to hold the office from the English government, and the first under the government of America. Franklin had during his life much experience in postal work, having been connected with this branch of the public service in all about forty years. As early as 1737 he was appointed postmaster of Philadelphia, so that in assuming the higher duties assigned to him sixteen years later, he was equal to the task.

Franklin's name first appears in connection with the American postal service in 1737. In his life he says:

"In 1737 Colonel Spotswood, late governor of Virginia, and then Postmaster-General, being dissatisfied with the conduct of his deputy at Philadelphia respecting some negligence in rendering and want of exactness in framing his accounts, took from him the commission and offered it to me. I accepted it readily and found it of great advantage; for, though the salary was small, it facilitated the correspondence that improved my newspaper, increased the number demanded, as well as the advertisements to be inserted, so that it came to afford me a considerable income."

He began his work as postmaster general by making a tour of New York, New Jersey, New England and Pennsylvania, visiting the principal postoffices in each, and personally inspecting the conditions under which they were working. He began a series of reforms which placed the postal service on a vastly better footing than it had been on before. His work is perhaps best summed up in a few sentences from his own pen. Up to the time of his appointment, he says, "the American postoffice

had never yielded anything to Britain. We (meaning himself and his assistants) were to have 600 pounds a year between us, if we could make that sum out of the profits of the office. In the first four years the office became above 900 pounds in debt to us. But it soon after began to repay us; and before I was dismissed by a freak of the minister's, we had brought it to yield three times as much clear revenue to the crown as the postoffice of Ireland. Since that impudent transaction they have received from it not one farthing."

The rough conditions of travel was quite in keeping with the crude conditions of the postal service on the accession of Franklin to the chief position in the American postal service.

In the year 1745 John Dalley, a surveyor, informed the public that he had just made a survey of the road from Trenton to Amboy, in New Jersey, and had set up marks at every two miles to guide travelers. It was paid for by private subscriptions, and he proposed to survey the whole road from Philadelphia to New York in the same way if a sufficient sum could be made up. Although there was at that time no surveyed road, and, of course, no road opened between the two largest cities in the colonies, the population had increased to at least a million of people.

In 1753 the practice of delivering letters by the penny-post or letter-carrier, and of advertising undelivered letters began. The post-offices were so few and scattering that letters and packets for all persons residing in Newton, Bristol, and Chester, in Pennsylvania, and even in New Castle, in Delaware, were sent to the postoffice in Philadelphia, where they remained until called for. Bristol is 20 miles from Philadelphia in one direction and New Castle 40 miles in an opposite direction, making a distance of 60 miles with but one office.

The mail from Philadelphia North in 1753 went and returned but once a week in summer, and once a fortnight in winter as it had for twenty-five years previously.

The cause of Franklin's removal was doubtless his participation in the agitation which two years after that event resulted in the Declaration of Independence.

One of the first acts of the Continental Congress was the appointment of a postmaster general for the united colonies with a salary of \$1,000 per annum, his residence to be in Philadelphia. Benjamin Franklin was unanimously chosen to this office. He was allowed a secretary at a salary of \$340, with power to appoint as many deputies as he might see proper. By this Congress a line of posts was established from Falmouth, in New England, to Savannah, in Georgia, with as many cross-posts as the postmaster general might see fit to establish. The pay for deputies was to be 20 per cent. on all sums under \$1,000 and 10 per cent. for all sums above \$1,000 a year. It was resolved at this time to establish a weekly post to South Carolina.

The following is copied from the Virginia Gazette, printed at Williamsburg, Va., September 1, 1775:

"This day William Goddard, esq., surveyor, &c., to the Constitutional Post-Office arrived in this city on a tour through the several united colonies to establish offices in the principal towns and other commercial places under the authority of Benjamin Franklin, esq., who is appointed Postmaster-General by the honorable the Constitutional Congress; and as soon the officers are commissioned and the routes fixed the establishment will immediately take place."

In the Revolutionary struggle that followed we lose sight for a time of postal matters. Dr. Franklin departed for France in 1776.

We catch a glimpse of the meagerness of the office in the memorial presented to Congress in November, 1776, by Ebenezer Hazard, who had been appointed deputy postmaster under Franklin, and subsequently became himself Postmaster-General under the Continental Congress. He prays in his memorial for an increased allowance, since under the operation of the rule giving him 20 per cent. of the first \$1,000 and 10 per cent. of the remaining sums received by him he has realized in one year, from October, 1775, to October, 1776, only about 108 pounds sterling, or \$550.

We deduce from this the total revenues for the district

for the year and find that they yielded something less than \$5,000.

The memorialist says he was not able to employ an assistant; that he was obliged to leave the city of New York to keep near the headquarters of the Army, "who are almost the only persons for whom letters now come by post." He further states that, owing to the frequent removals of the Continental Army, he was subjected to extraordinary expense, difficulties, and fatigues, "having paid an exorbitant price for every necessary of life and been obliged for want of a horse, which could not be procured, to follow the Army from place to place on foot."

This, it is believed, is the earliest instance on record of a *traveling postoffice* in this country, and provokes a smile as we think of the man who, six years later, was Postmaster-General, following the Army on foot, with his postoffice in a knapsack carried by a servant, doubtless, as he complains in a letter of same day and date to Rev. John Witherspoon that he is at an expense of nine shillings per diem "for my own and my servant's victuals only," and protests that he is not treated with dignity in being denied a horse, "although it was not my business as a postmaster to follow the Army like a sutler."

Thursday, November 7, 1776, a resolution was adopted in the Continental Congress appointing Richard Bache, son-in-law of Dr. Franklin, "Postmaster-General in the room of Dr. Franklin, who is absent."

The first Congress that was assembled under our present Constitution passed "An act for the temporary establishment of a postoffice," (approved September 22, 1789). This act directed the appointment of a Postmaster-General, and was to continue in force until the end of the next session of Congress. Under this provision, Samuel Osgood, of Massachusetts, was appointed by President Washington Postmaster-General of the United States, and this was the first appointment to that office. The first annual report was made two months later.

On April 4, 1796, Mr. Thatcher, from a special committee on postoffice matters, reported at some length to the House of Representatives. We quote a sentence from

this report as revealing the primitive methods of the time:

"All the papers and packages directed to distant customers, and to be left at different offices and places, are put loose into the portmanteau with others, for subscribers less distant, and as often as the mail is opened the newspapers are all thrown together out of the portmantaus, in order to find the individual paper or package to be left at such office or place. At such times there is good reason to suppose papers and small packages are taken away by persons present at opening the portmanteau, to whom they were not directed, but without the knowledge or privity of the postmasters or carriers of the mail. Sometimes, also, it may be presumed, single papers and small bundles are unintentionally omitted to be put into the portmanteau again, after they had been turned out, for the purpose of selecting such as are to be left at that particular place."

Such methods of distributing the mails are about as curious as the system of book-keeping then in vogue, by which the Postmaster-General, as he says in the first annual report, kept "the accounts in a manner that the Treasury shall not be able to charge him with any more money than he chooses to be charged with, which has in fact been the case, I believe, ever since the Revolution."

Mr. Habersham, Postmaster-General in 1798, submitted some remarks to Congress, in which he says the General Post-Office, at its first establishment, did not have more than sixty postoffices under its control, and there were not 2,000 miles of post-roads. The Postmaster-General, his assistant, and one clerk conducted all the business of the General Office.

He further states that the postoffices have increased to the number of nearly seven hundred, and that the mail is transported annually over more than 16,000 miles of post-roads, the whole work of accounts and correspondence being performed in the General Office by the Postmaster General, his assistant, and four good clerks.

Thus the eighteenth century closed with the Post-Office Department so insignificant in its extent and revenues that it would not be deemed worthy of so ample

notice if it were not for the fact that it was the small beginning out of which has grown the strength of the present. After some reference to the methods of transportation which prevailed previous to the introduction of railways, we shall be able properly to appreciate the great difference between the opening and the close of the last century.

CHAPTER IV.

GROWTH OF THE POSTOFFICE IN THE UNITED STATES.

The following table, showing the number of post-offices in the country each year since the adoption of the Constitution, will be of interest to those perusing this history:

Total number of postoffices in the United States on June 30 of each fifth year since 1790.

Year.	Number	Year.	Number	Year.	Number
1790.....	75	1830.....	8,450	1870... ..	28,492
1795.....	453	1835.....	10,770	1875.....	35,547
1800.....	903	1840.....	13,468	1880.....	42,989
1805.....	1,558	1845.....	14,183	1885.....	51,252
1810.....	2,300	1850.....	18,417	1890.....	62,401
1815.....	3,000	1855.....	24,410	1895.....	70,064
1820.....	4,500	1860.....	28,498	1900.....	76,688
1825.....	5,677	1865.....	20,550	1901.....	76,945

The foregoing table is given as a matter of interesting statistics, and shows the gradual increase in the number of postoffices from the establishment of the postal service to the present day. The records fail to give the number of offices in existence in 1813. With the exception of a slight decline in 1842, the table shows a steady increase from 1790 to 1859. Between the years of 1859 and 1870, owing to the disorganized condition of the postal service in the Southern States, caused by the rebellion, the steady advancement in the number of offices was arrested, but from 1870 to the present time there has been a steady and rapid increase in the number of offices established, indicating the rapid progress our country has made, not only in population but in material strength and power.

In the year 1790 there were seventy-five postoffices established and in operation. At that time the population of the thirteen States which then constituted the Union was 3,929,214, or, for convenience, stating it in round

numbers, there were 3,930,000 people, served by seventy-five postoffices, an average of one office to 52,400 people. Since that time the offices have been multiplied over 1,000 times, while the population has multiplied nearly twenty times.

The following table will be interesting, showing the population, in round numbers, by decades; since 1790, the number of postoffices in operation for the same years, and the average number of persons to each office.

Year.	Population.	Number of post-offices	Average number of persons to each office.
1790.....	3,930,000	75	52,400
1800.....	5,310,000	903	5,880
1810.....	7,240,000	2,300	3,148
1820.....	9,630,000	4,500	2,140
1830.....	12,870,000	8,450	1,521
1840.....	17,070,000	13,468	1,267
1850.....	23,190,000	18,417	1,259
1860.....	31,640,000	28,498	1,110
1870.....	38,560,000	28,492	1,353
1880.....	50,150,000	42,989	1,166
1890.....	62,620,000	62,401	1,003
1900.....	76,295,000	76,688	995
1901.....	77,257,000	76,945	1,004

In the year 1790 there were seventy-five postoffices in operation. At that time the population of the thirteen States which then constituted the Union was 3,929,214, or, for convenience, stating it in round numbers, there were 3,930,000 people, served by seventy-five postoffices an average of one office to 52,400 people. Since that time the offices have been multiplied over 1,000 times, while the population has multiplied over twenty times.

From the commencement of the government under the Constitution up until the year 1812 each decade showed a slight balance of receipts over expenditures in the postal service. In other words the department had a surplus. From 1812 till 1882, each year showed a deficit, which sometimes grew to threatening proportions. The year 1860 shows the greatest deficit of any since the foundation of the government, and was justly viewed with alarm

by those charged with the conduct of the postal service, as well as by the general public. As against a revenue of \$8,518,067.40 there was a total expenditure of \$19,170,609.87, showing that in the year named the postal revenue was only equal to two-fifths of the expenditures. Some \$4,000,000 of this sum was used to pay expenses of the previous year, Congress having failed to appropriate. The following table, covering practically the entire period of the railway mail service, is full of interest.

*Comparative statement of receipts and expenditures of
the Postoffice Department from July 1, 1836,
to June 30, 1902.*

Fiscal year.	Revenue.	Expenditures.
1837.....	\$4,945,668.21	\$3,288,319.03
1840.....	4,543,521.92	4,718,235.64
1845.....	4,289,841.80	4,320,731.99
1850.....	5,499,984.86	5,212,953.43
1855.....	6,642,136.13	9,963,342.29
1860.....	8,518,067.40	19,170,609.89
1865.....	14,556,158.70	13,694,728.28
1870.....	19,772,220.65	23,998,837.63
1875.....	26,791,360.59	33,611,309.45
1880.....	33,315,479.34	36,542,803.68
1885.....	42,560,843.83	50,046,235.21
1890.....	60,882,097.92	66,259,547.84
1895.....	76,983,128.19	87,179,551.28
1896.....	82,499,208.40	90,932,669.50
1897.....	82,665,462.73	94,077,242.38
1898.....	89,012,618.55	98,033,523.61
1899.....	95,021,384.17	101,632,160.92
1900.....	102,354,579.29	107,740,267.99
1901.....	111,631,193.39	115,554,920.87
1902.....	121,848,047.00	124,785,697.07

The years 1882 and 1883 were the only years showing an actual surplus of receipts over expenditures, and Congress at once took advantage of the favorable condition to reduce the postage from three cents for one-half ounce to two cents for one ounce of first-class matter. This change is the cause of the slight falling off in the revenue observable during the few years immediately following. The

service then entered upon the wonderfully successful financial career which resulted in a total increase of more than ten million dollars in a single year—1902 over 1901. In his annual report for the year 1902 the postmaster general comments as follows upon the financial phase of the postal service:

INCREASED EXPENDITURES AND DIMINISHED DEFICITS.

“The increase in postal revenues not only attests the wonderful prosperity of the people and the activity of business interests throughout the country, but also indicates that the extension of postal facilities carefully directed results sooner or later in increased receipts and diminished deficits. With phenomenal growth of population and other favoring conditions, the mail matter poured into the postoffices has rapidly helped to lessen the percentage of deficiencies. Despite largely increased expenditures, the revenues gradually approximate the expenses after each added outlay has marked a new standard.

“In 1872 the receipts of the Postoffice Department were in round numbers \$22,000,000, against an expenditure of 26,500,000 a deficiency of \$4,500,000, or 20.45 per cent. of the revenue. In 1882 the receipts were \$42,000,000, against an expenditure of \$41,000,000, showing a surplus of \$1,000,000. In 1892 the receipts had increased to \$71,000,000, against an expenditure of \$77,000,000, leaving a deficiency of \$6,000,000, or 8.75 per cent. of the revenue. In 1902 the receipts were about \$122,000,000, with an expenditure of nearly \$125,000,000 reducing the deficiency to about \$3,000,000, of 2.46 per cent. of the revenue.

POSTAL REDUCTIONS FOLLOW INCREASED RECEIPTS.

“Deficits in the postal service are not to be viewed with apprehension. It is the policy, whenever the postal receipts exceed or come near the expenditures, to extend postal facilities and cheapen the cost of the service to the public.

“The receipts in 1882 indicated such a healthy condition of the postal revenues and expenditures as to induce

Congress to distribute the benefits of the surplus among the people in the reduction of letter postage from three cents per half ounce to two cents per ounce. Inasmuch as the revenue received from first-class matter at the old rate of three cents per half ounce was about \$16,000,000, the reduction of postage to those writing letters was in the neighborhood of \$5,000,000.

"Under the seemingly double handicap of reduced rates and increased weights, the Postoffice Department was compelled to face a newly created deficiency, which, in 1885, was about \$7,500,000. In 1892 it was \$6,000,000, and from that year until 1897 the deficiency grew to \$11,000,000. During all this time the beneficent grant of cheaper postage not only aided business, but promoted the exchange of personal communications. It helped the farmers to secure the free distribution of literature from State agricultural experiment stations, which Congress authorized in 1887. The rates of postage on seeds and bulbs were reduced at that time one-half. Congress also reduced the rate on college papers from one cent for two ounces to one cent per pound. Rates of postage on first, second, third, and fourth-class matter had been reduced, yet with all these additions to the burden of the mails the significant fact remains that the deficiencies in recurring periods have grown smaller in their percentage relation to the revenues.

"Efforts have been made in the past and are now being made to better, wherever possible, the condition of postal employees. This is especially so in the case of clerks in postoffices. There were upward of 12,000 clerks promoted on July 1st last, the aggregate allowance for these promotions being about \$1,200,000. Fully 11,000 of these promotions were of clerks who received less than \$1,000 per annum."

The most astonishing fact in connection with the postal service which can be stated is the naked figures themselves. The actual increase for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1902, over the previous year was some \$2,000,000 more than the entire postal revenue for the whole United States in 1860.



PART II.

ORIGIN AND GROWTH OF
THE RAILWAY MAIL SERVICE.



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CHAPTER V.

THE STAGE COACH ERA.

The stage coach was probably invented by Adam before he reached middle life—that is some time during the first four hundred years he lived in Asia Minor. When he and Eve made their annual journey to spend their holidays with their descendants in the Land of Nod, they no doubt traveled by stage, and had they lived so long and retained their migratory tendencies, they would, if traveling from New York to Philadelphia in the year A. D. 1834, have been obliged to travel by this kind of conveyance. Homer, Caesar, Dante, Shakespeare, Bonaparte, Washington and Webster each in his day doubled his legs and fretted away the weary hours of the day or night jolting over the surface of the earth in the same kind of vehicle, the only difference being a slight variation in the oaths of the drivers as the centuries passed.

No history of the railway mail service would be complete without some reference to the stage coach era, since we never understand one step in a progression until we comprehend the preceeding steps which lead up to it. The great improvements of recent times are brought out in stronger light by the dark background preceding the days of steam and electricity. The slowness of the old method is in constant contrast with the rapidity of the present, the smallness of the business, the irregularity of arrivals and departures, the expense of the service to the department, the cost of its privileges to the public, are

all points offset by the extensive regular and comparatively inexpensive service of the present.

Looking back for a moment to what preceded the introduction of the railroad in 1834, we find that in 1833 a New York daily paper on Saturday complains that the Washington papers, which should have reached New York Friday, have only been received on Saturday, and that those due on Saturday have not arrived excepting one which is wholly taken up with the debate of Monday previous. This debate is promised the readers on Monday following. In other words the news from Washington was exactly one week old when published in New York. Philadelphia papers of the time half grumblingly observe that the distance from that city to Washington, about 140 miles, required forty-eight hours for the transmission of the mails.

In the winter of 1832 New York editors united in establishing an express between Philadelphia and New York which out-traveled the U. S. mail. This spurred the department to some exertion, and the mail was soon running between these two chief cities in six hours, ninety miles, and between Washington and Philadelphia in twenty hours.

In 1834, with a part rail line, complaint is made in Washington that Saturday's New York papers did not come to hand until the Tuesday afternoon following. We find a record of a most extraordinary proceeding, in which the passengers or the mail must be left behind, owing to the overloaded condition of the stage. The passengers make up a purse of \$50, and depositing it to pay the contractor's fine if it should be exacted for leaving the mail behind, move on without the mail bags.

A correspondent writing from Cincinnati in 1835, says: "The newspaper mail is now conveyed in canvas bags, and a portion of these are thrown off at the stage office whenever the conveyance of passenger baggage requires. In a journey to New York and back again last fall I witnessed this in many cases. Since that, I fully understand why the newspaper mail miscarries when the letters arrive."

An old paper notes as a piece of enterprise that in 1826

"ten stages and twenty-one mails depart weekly from Cincinnati."

Mr. Hobbie, of the Postoffice Department, writes to a contractor about this time, saying that there are complaints of mail so much injured by the rain that the letters were destroyed, the papers could not be delivered or forwarded, and naively asks in a postscript:

"Why not adopt the postmaster's suggestion of boring holes in the bottom of the boot to let off the water so that it shall not all be soaked up by letters and newspapers?"

In 1835 the average expense of transportation by horse and sulky was estimated to be about five cents per mile, and by stages about thirteen cents per mile. At this date we find the contractor is voted by Congress \$5,000, on the recommendation of the Postmaster General and the Secretary of War, to reimburse him for repairs put upon the Cumberland road, which had grown almost impassable, so that the mail had to be carried part of the way by another road, causing much delay.

At this time we find Mr. Hobbie writing a rebukeful letter to the contractor because the Southern mail arrives at Newark, N. J., in a one-horse wagon and remains there until the postmaster can hire a conveyance for it to New York, and also because the postmaster states that he found a mail pouch for Philadelphia from Trenton under the counters of the Eagle Hotel, which had been there for some days. His letter closes: "How is this? Your explanation is desired."

We find about the time when the mails first began to be carried on railways a condition of things like this:

The contractors were running between Washington and Baltimore three lines of stages at different hours of the day, for the accommodation of passengers. They were required by their contract, whenever it should be ordered by the department, to carry three mails a day between the two cities. There was nothing in the contract requiring them to run a double line at any time, in case the mails should be too large and heavy to be carried by one line of stages; since this was a circumstance which had never occurred when the contract was made, and was not taken into contemplation. When it was subse-

quently found that the mail was too heavy to be carried on one line, the contractors proposed to leave a part of it till their next line should start, several hours later. This they were prohibited from doing, but were directed to convey the entire mail at once, and without any delay, no matter what force it might require or how many lines should be run. The contractors obeyed this order claiming for such service extra pay, which was allowed by the department.

Such facts in the history of mail transportation in ante-railroad times justify the belief that from the beginning the public has been willing to sanction any reasonable outlay which is devoted either to experimental efforts or to permanent improvement of the service. The sensitiveness of the people, even in what seem to us slow-going stage-coach days, on the question of rapid transfer of the mails, and their impatience of delays, foreshadowed the policy which is now being so systematically carried out, that the people shall have the mails just as soon as it is possible for the ingenuity of man to convey them. Already we find the department officials chafing under unfavorable newspaper criticism. Mr. O. B. Brown, in a letter to a contractor in 1832, says:

"If a newspaper to an editor should be detained it would make more noise than to leave a hundred letters on commercial business. Let the public in every hamlet and dell be gratified, and every editor pleased."

The contrast between those early days and the present is emphasized by recalling that stage contractors and drivers were liable to a penalty of from \$200 to \$500 "for carrying any colored person, unless such person shall produce the certificate of the clerk of the court of the county from which the stage-coach, steamboat, etc., is about to depart that such colored person is free, or generally reputed to be so."

In 1832 a United States Senator congratulates the country on the great improvement of the mail service as follows:

"This morning, I find on my table letters and newspapers brought from New York, a distance of 250 miles, in thirty-six hours, and from Boston, 500 miles, in three

days. We have the mail expedited from New Orleans to Washington in one-half its former time; from Baltimore to Pittsburg, within the last few days, there is a new arrangement by which one or more days are gained. There is scarcely a week or even a day in which some new improvement is not made, facilitating the transport of the mails.

The department has kept even pace with the country in its march of improvement. These great improvements involve great expenses; and although the department, in some cases, has gained more by the improvement than it has expended in making it it could not be expected such would be the general result."

We find in this period an arrangement like this: The contractors are to transport the mail between Philadelphia and Pittsburg daily, in four-horse post-coaches; to run two lines a day, one to go through in a little more than two days, the other in three and one-half days. The object of two lines was that the principal letter-mail might be carried with rapidity, the stages not being heavily loaded and not required to stop at all way offices to exchange mails. The slower line was to carry all newspapers and letters for intermediate offices, and was called the *way mail*. But then, as now, the newspaper-reading public were not to be put off with the old saw that "a half a loaf is better than no bread." Newspapers were put up as letters and sent by those having the franking privilege on the fast mail. The result was that some persons were receiving the news from one to three days in advance of the regular newspaper mail. In our day, when no one reads yesterday's paper, we can understand what an exasperation that must have been. To allay complaint the contractors put their newspaper mail on the fast coaches, and asked the department for \$10,000 a year in addition to the contract price, closing their request with a statement going to show that in those days contractors were not strangers to those better feelings which rise instinctive in the human breast—"Our own feelings will not suffer us to perform a service in which we cannot give satisfaction to the public."

The special agents at this time report bad roads, and mails often laid aside to make room for passengers, and that bags of newspapers were unhesitatingly left on the road when it was inconvenient to carry them. It was not an unusual thing for express mails to pass the regular mails, arriving at the principal cities with newspaper slips containing the latest commercial news, the debates of Congress, and such other matters as could not be anticipated, as now, by telegraph. The regular mail was thus turned into a jest by means of the department's own expresses, so that we find newspapers announcing as a special feature that they contain news forty-eight hours in advance of the mail. One of the journals of the time justly characterizes such a condition of things as a "burning shame."

The older contracts contained a clause stipulating on lines where the mails had grown very heavy that the mail is to be carried daily, "in four-horse coaches, *constructed under the directions of the department exclusively for the mails*, except an outside seat for the accommodation of three passengers." From this it will be seen that in constructing and running cars exclusively for the mails the department has but followed the line of policy that was already necessary in stage-coach days. In contracts of this nature proposals were also received for two lines of coaches, to run at the same hours, with full privilege to convey passengers so far as the weight and bulk of the mails would allow.

We need also to recall how small a factor the railroad service was at first. There were but a few hundred miles of road in 1835. The average rate of speed was but little, if any, above the time made by stage-coach and horseback, many of the contracts for these latter methods calling for eight, nine, ten, and even as high as fifteen miles an hour. Among the earlier proposals, we find cases where the horse was allowed the contract because he made quicker time than the railroad. In other cases the railroad agreed to carry the mails at certain rates, provided the schedule requiring eleven miles per hour would be reduced.

In this state of things, with broken sections of road here and there, it was not possible yet to do more than quicken up a through stage route. There were no connecting lines of rail. Whatever use was made of the railroads was in many cases at the instance of the stage contractor, who appears to have made a subcontract with the railroad.

An extract from the report of the Senate Committee, made January 27, 1835, on the condition and proceedings of the postoffice department, will be of interest here as it throws much light on the state of the mail service at that time:

SENATE COMMITTEE REPORT.

"It appears by a report from the department, that in March, 1833, the postmaster general determined to expedite the mail between Washington and New York, and between that place and the Eastern cities, with a view to put down private mails and to do away with the necessity of employing a public express for that purpose, and as had been done in the preceding winter.

"It was found necessary to run the mail from Philadelphia to New York in twelve hours, in bad roads as well as good. For this purpose the contractor was engaged to perform the service within that time, but the execution was considered impracticable if he were compelled to stop at the numerous postoffices on the route, and therefore an additional line was established for the purpose of supplying them. This arrangement rendered unnecessary the express mail before spoken of. This additional mail cost the department \$5,125, which is \$1,975 more than the express mail, which was in consequence ordered to be discontinued. By this latter arrangement the mail was dispatched from Washington to New York in fifteen hours less time on the winter arrangement than before, and a day was gained in the expedition of the Southern mail to Boston and Albany and the numerous points beyond. This requirement of extraordinary speed on route No. 951 had the effect of inducing the contractor to arrange with the Camden and Amboy Railroad Company

for the transportation of the city mails and the Great Eastern and Southern mails passing through New Jersey, and thereby secured to the service of the mail all the expedition that could be given by the railroad, which had been completed and put in operation since the making of the mail contracts for that section of the United States.

"It is of the greatest importance that the movement of the mail should be as rapid as that of travelers, especially between large cities like Philadelphia and New York. It is apparent that much difficulty may arise in effecting this, where a change in the mode of travel has taken place subsequently to the contracts being let for four years, as in the event of the construction of a railroad respecting which there are no general provisions of law, as in the case of steamboats. In this instance, the running of two lines of mails on the railroad was accomplished, and a daily line of stage mail continued to the towns situated between Philadelphia and New York, on the old route, at an additional cost of moderate amount, compared with the amount paid on the contract, or the rate of compensation asked by the railroad companies for transporting the mail, and not an unreasonable price, in our judgments, for the advantages secured by the improvement.

* * * * *

"It appears from the testimony, that in the beginning of the year 1833, such was the excited and interesting state of public affairs, that the editor of the Journal of Commerce, a newspaper printed in the city of New York, felt justified, at its own expense, to establish an express to run from Philadelphia to the city of New York, and by this means obtained the intelligence earlier than its arrival in the regular course of the mail. This express had been in operation for several days, and by reason of it the editor of that paper obtained information at an earlier period than the other editors in the city of New York. As it was to be expected, this produced dissatisfaction, that a private individual could obtain intelligence for himself and patrons before the government furnished it to the citizens generally.

"In this state of things the postmaster general deemed it his duty to employ an express mail, which should convey

intelligence as rapidly as it could be furnished by the individual alluded to. He accordingly engaged Mr. Reeside, an efficient contractor, to perform this special service, promising to give him a fair compensation for the same so long as it should be deemed necessary for the government express to be run.

"Doubts have been expressed as to the propriety of this measure as adopted by the postmaster general. Although we are inclined to the opinion that celerity in the transportation of the mail has been too much regarded in some cases, yet, in this instance, the object of the department was laudable and praiseworthy. It should not be permitted that an individual should establish a mode of communication and continue it by which intelligence should be received and acted upon by him before the community at large can have the benefit of it through the medium of the government mails.

"If such a measure on the part of an individual cannot be arrested by law, the government should not hesitate to adopt means, although of an expensive character, to place the community generally in possession of the same intelligence at as early a period as practicable.

"It should defeat the efforts of individuals to exercise functions and powers belonging exclusively to itself; especially where such efforts are attended with the effect of giving them advantages over the rest of the community. We therefore conclude that it was proper in the postoffice department to put this express mail into operation. And we have not heard of any attempt to set up a private express, either for purposes of speculation or any other, since the one made by the editors of the Journal of Commerce; and it is hoped that the measures adopted by the postmaster general in this instance will teach all our citizens the inutility of such attempts."

Reeside contracted to run the distance between Philadelphia and New York, 90 miles, in six hours, making fifteen miles an hour. The horses were run five miles and changed, making eighteen changes. It took two horses to carry the mail. This made seventy-two horses for each day's service with reserves to supply the places of the dis-

abled. The charge was \$1 for each mile run by each horse.

"The postmaster general has just begun an experiment which cannot be successful, because it is oppressive, unequal, and vexatious in its operation. It consists in the establishment of an express mail from Philadelphia to New York, and from New York to Philadelphia, to *carry the exchange papers* of printers between the two cities, leaving the bulk of the newspaper mail to find its way to and fro as it can! Under this happy conception of a plan for expediting the mail, the New York subscribers to all newspapers South and West of Philadelphia may whistle for their papers. If one of our subscribers in New York, for example, gets this day's paper by this day week, he will be in great luck. We should not be surprised, indeed, if he did not get it till Christmas. This will never do. The new arrangement is well meant, no doubt, but it will be found in practice to be intolerable, and must be abandoned. (National Intelligencer, Washington, February 5, 1833.)

"The eastern mail also arrived at a late hour, but not at all surprisingly so, when the state of the roads between this and Philadelphia is considered. *Beyond Philadelphia* the mail has been a whole day (twenty-fours) in the rear of even its usual tortoise-pace for the last three days." (National Intelligencer, January 29, 1833.)

Dickens, in his *American Notes*, gives here and there sentences detailing his experience in traveling, which enable us better than anything else to imagine the inconveniences of those days when the stage-coach was the prevailing method of conveyance and the railroads in their incipency. In his visit made in 1842 he speaks of the journey from New York to Philadelphia (all rail) occupying between five and six hours, and leaving Philadelphia at six o'clock in the morning, reaching Washington after a journey of twelve and one-half hours. Again, leaving Harrisburg on Friday he arrived at the foot of the Alleghanies on Sunday morning, and on Monday evening came in sight of the furnace fires of Pittsburg. His description of the journey from Columbus to Sandusky in an old-time stage-coach is worth reproducing

for the benefit of those who never had similar experience:

"This great portion of the way was over what is called the "corduroy" road, which is made by throwing trunks of trees into a marsh and leaving them to settle there. The very slightest of the jolts with which the ponderous carriage fell from log to log was enough, it seemed, to have dislocated all the bones in the human body. It would be impossible to experience a similar set of sensations, in any other circumstances, unless perhaps in attempting to go up to the top of Saint Paul's in an omnibus."

The same writer, in one of his stories, compares the advent of the railway to an earthquake, by which the whole country was rent to its center; houses were knocked down; streets broken through and stopped; deep pits and trenches dug in the ground; enormous heaps of earth and clay thrown up.

"In short, the yet unfinished and unopened railroad was in progress; and, from the very core of all this dire disorder, trailed smoothly away upon its mighty course of civilization and improvement."

The men are yet living who saw the beginning of this great revolution in domestic life, in social and financial affairs, inaugurated by the new motive power. As the commencement of railway travel and railway mail transportation were almost coincident, it will be impossible to avoid some details which belong to both.

CHAPTER VI.

FIRST MENTION OF RAILWAYS.

In speaking of the origin of the Railway Mail Service, we are likely to carry the present condition of things back to the beginning, which totally unfits us for comprehending what has been accomplished in more recent years. If we go back to the time when railways first began to carry the mails, we find cumbrous engines, rude tracks, wooden rails, strapped with iron, trains running at a speed very little beyond what the stage-coaches had been making, and, in some cases, in competition between the stage and railways, we find the contracts allowed to the stages because they made quicker time.

The earliest mention that we can find of railways in the records of Congress is in the bill introduced in the Senate April 23, 1828, authorizing the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad Company to import iron for the construction of their road, which was laid on the table, after debate, and subsequently taken up, ordered to a third reading, and passed. In May, 1830, there was a debate in the Senate on the bill authorizing a subscription by the general government to the stock of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad Company. The bill was laid on the table by a vote of twenty-one yeas to nineteen nays.

Thursday, March 15, 1832, a resolution was offered in the House of Representatives by Mr. Howard, of Maryland, and passed the same day, instructing the committee on manufactures to inquire into the expediency of allowing a drawback to the whole amount of the duty upon iron imported for railroads, to be used by a State, or a company incorporated by a State, when it shall be ascertained to the satisfaction of the Secretary of the Treasury that the said iron is permanently laid on the road.

Thursday, February 9, 1832, Mr. Davis, of Massachusetts, in the course of a debate on a resolution of Mr.

Mercer, from the committee on Internal improvements, to print the report of the British House of Commons on the subject of the operation of steam carriages on roads, said that "he conceived the subject of land transportation by steam to be one of the greatest importance to the nation. They had seen the almost incredible effects which it had produced on water carriage, and there was reason to believe it would be found still more powerful by land. If the transmission of intelligence from one part of the country to the other could be facilitated, whether regarded as to its advantages in the state of war or peace, it was the duty of the Government to lend its aid to such a purpose."

In February, 1832, the House of Representatives discussed a resolution to print certain documents on the relative merits and cost of canals and railroads. The Boston and Worcester Railroad was opened Saturday, September 20, 1834, from Boston to West Hopkinson, twenty-four miles, thirteen miles having been in use for some time previous.

The Portsmouth and Ronoake Railroad was opened September 23, 1834, running from Portsmouth to Suffolk, Va. The Philadelphia and Trenton Railroad was opened the whole distance, 28 miles, November 1, 1834. Two trains ran a day, one with locomotive and one with horses.

The formal opening of the railway between Washington and Baltimore took place Tuesday, August 25, 1835. The contractors at this time for conveying the mail by stage between those cities wrote the department for permission to carry the mail on the railway cars. The postmaster general first objected on the ground that the Eastern mail at Baltimore and Southern mail at Washington would be likely to miss connection. He thought it would not do at all to place transportation on the railroad without providing for the forwarding of the mails Baltimore to Washington when they should be too late for the cars. This objection was overcome by an agreement on the part of the contractors to convey the mails, which failed to connect with the cars, by stage, and the postmaster general then gave his consent to the arrange-

ment, sending a letter to the postmasters at Baltimore and Washington, notifying them of the change. As this is one of the earliest lines in operation and this transfer from stage to railroad one of the earliest mentioned, the letter will be read with some interest after nearly seventy years:

POSTOFFICE DEPARTMENT, NORTHERN DIVISION,

September 16, 1835.

SIR: Arrangments have been made by the contractors and assented to by the postmaster general for the conveyance of the great mail from Washington to Baltimore, and from Baltimore to Washington, by the railroad cars for the remainder of the current year, commencing this day. The cars will leave this city at half past 4 p. m., and Baltimore at 4 p. m.; they will take from Baltimore the mail from the East, and whatever may be in your office at the time of departure. The night coach line will be continued, leaving Baltimore at 8 p. m. with the mails from Harrisburg, etc., and the way mail. It will leave this city at 10 p. m. with the newspaper and way mail.

In case of the non-arrival of the mail from the South at this city, and from the East to Baltimore, in time for the cars, it is to be conveyed by coaches, so as to save the connection. The postmaster general has also agreed to the conveyance of the mail between Baltimore and Frederick by the railroad.

AMOS KENDALL.

J. S. SKINNER, ESQ.,

Postmaster at Baltimore, Md.

WM. JONES, ESQ.,

Postmaster at Washington, D. C.

It is claimed that the first locomotive run on this continent was at Honesdale, Pa., on the railroad of the Delaware and Hudson Canal Company, August 9, 1829. The South Carolina Railroad Company was the first corporate body to adopt the locomotive as the tractive power on a railroad, September, 1829. The first road in the United States to run a hundred miles in continuous line was the South Carolina Railroad. The cars began run-

ning on the Boston and Providence road from Boston to Canton (15 miles) in September, 1834. The cars passed over the whole line on the Boston and Providence Railroad for the first time on Tuesday, July 27, 1835, the viaduct at Canton having been completed.

Mr. Barry, the postmaster general, under date of September 15, 1834, wrote to Wm. Gibbs McNeil, superintendent of the Boston and Providence Railroad, saying that any arrangement made by him with Messrs. Stockton & Stokes, contractors for carrying the mail from Boston, Mass., to Providence R. I., calculated to expedite the mail on that important route, "and which shall not involve the Department in any additional expense," would be satisfactory to the postmaster general:

September, 15, 1834.

SIR: Messrs. Stockton & Stokes, contractors for carrying the mail from Boston, Mass., to Providence, R. I., having signified to me your willingness to arrange with their agent for transporting the mail on that section of the Boston and Providence Railroad now in operation between Boston and Canton, I have to observe that any arrangement made with these gentlemen calculated to expedite the mail on that important route, and which shall not involve the department in any additional expense, will be satisfactory to me.

W. T. BARRY.

WILLIAM GIBBS MCNEIL, Esq.,

Superintendent of Boston and Providence Railroad.
(Care of Stockton & Stokes, Baltimore, Md.)

As a result of this communication from the Department, the contractors withdrew their stages altogether from this route. Complaint was made to the Department that the mail arrived at Providence and departed therefrom "in a chaise driven by a boy."

The contractors are then reminded that the privilege extended to them of availing themselves of the facility of transportation afforded by the completion of the section of the Boston and Providence Railroad between Boston and Canton (15 miles) must not be constructed into authority for the withdrawal of their entire line of stages from

that important route. After some further explanations the matter was satisfactorily adjusted.

In August, 1834, the postmasters at Philadelphia, New York, Bordentown, and Trenton, were notified that arrangements had been made for the conveyance of a special mail from New York and Philadelphia to Trenton, N. J., and back by the railroad cars, via. Bordentown. In the same month the contractors from Philadelphia to Lancaster were notified that the trips would be reduced to three a week between Philadelphia, West Chester, and Lancaster, "railroad daily mail to West Chester to continue."

June 27, 1835, the Wilmington and Susquehanna Railroad was formally opened. Monday, July 20, 1835, the first cars began to run regularly between Washington and Baltimore, from the District line twice daily, "occasionally at the rate of 20 miles an hour," so the news notice of the day had it. A local paper noticing the opening of the railroad, says: "By applying our modern mode of computing distances by hours instead of days and miles, the distance between the two cities is henceforth to be two hours; that from Washington to New York, twenty-six hours; and to Boston, forty hours! Are we in a dream?" The formal opening of the road was on Tuesday, August 25.

The mayor of Washington, W. A. Bradley, esq., in an address on the opening of the road, said:

"But a few years have passed since the weary traveler, leaving Washington with the rising sun, was still found toiling his way to Baltimore as that sun set. Now the man of business may make his arrangements for the day in the morning, visit and purchase his goods in Baltimore at noon, and long before the evening return to Washington, and unpack his wares for sale on the ensuing morning. May we not then reasonably hope that this is but a span in a great line of communication which, even in our day, shall almost dissipate distance and bring New Orleans as near to Boston as that city now is to our own."

July 29, 1835, the postmaster general, Mr. Kendall, writes the contractors that he desires to procure the trans-

portation of the mail on the Washington and Baltimore road, if it can be effected on terms which shall be acceptable to them or the Department. "I would prefer," he says, "a direct arrangement between the company and the Department on such terms as would bid fair to make it permanent."

In such irregular and blind fashion did this great interest struggle into existence at the first. Like all beginnings, it was small and difficult, and many years were to elapse before the real significance of the preparations was apparent.

A Washington paper of Aug. 10, 1835, makes the prophecy that "the day is not distant when travelers leaving Washington in the morning will dine in Philadelphia and arrive the same evening in New York."

In 1835 Mr. Hendricks, of Indiana, offered the following resolution:

"Resolved, That the Committee on Roads and Canals be instructed to inquire into the expediency of authorizing the several railroad companies chartered by the State of Indiana to construct roads from the Ohio River into the interior of the State, to use the timber of the public lands in the construction of their respective works; and also to inquire into the expediency of making grants of the public lands for the location of such roads, and to aid the companies in making them wheresoever the same may pass over any unsold lands of the United States."

In a letter from Mr. S. R. Hobbie, second assistant postmaster general, addressed to the postmaster general, December 16, 1835, making some suggestions as to the best method of correcting delays reported between New York and Washington, we get some light on the methods in vogue in the beginning of *fast mail* service. Mr. Hobbie says he apprehends that the delays are caused by the separation of mail matter for the purpose of relieving the most rapid lines from an excessive weight of mail. This practice has been allowed, he says, in the winter. What the practice was he tells us in the next sentence:

"Weekly newspapers, pamphlets, and public documents have been allowed to be classed as slow matter and placed in separate bags, labeled *ordinary mail*; these have been

sent through New Jersey by the day line, and through to Baltimore, by the way of York, and to Washington by the day-line, making a delay of about three days. The residue, being letters and daily, tri-weekly and semi-weekly papers is called "fast mail," and the bags containing them were so labeled, and dispatched by the most rapid conveyance."

One of the first references to the possible conveyance of the mail by railroad is found in a letter from O. B. Brown, chief clerk of the postoffice department, to Nathaniel Green, postmaster at Boston, Mass., dated March 19, 1832. In this letter an explanation of the delays in mail service is offered in the fact that these delays have originated between New York and Philadelphia.

"The stages from Philadelphia to New York have, during the past winter, frequently been drawn for miles upon the axle trees, so deep were the roads." At the close of this letter Mr. Brown says:

"Your suggestions that the great mail should be continued on directly from Philadelphia (*upon the completion of the Camden and Amboy Railroad*) so as to gain twelve hours in its arrivals at New York, Hartford, and Boston, will have all due consideration, and you are aware of the disposition of the postmaster general to afford to the country at large every possible mail accommodation within his means and powers to grant."

Evidently the suggestion had come to the department from the postmaster at Boston that this road should be used on its completion.

About the middle of February, 1834, the contractor engaged the Amboy and Camden Railroad Company to convey for him the mails of the great line, and also of the second, or city line, running stages from Jersey City, opposite New York, to Amboy, the termination of the railroad. * * * This arrangement was a desideratum with the department, and could only be effected through Mr. Reeside, as he held the contract for the entire service until the 31st December, 1835.

May 19, 1834, James Reeside is notified that the newspaper mail from New York, due in Philadelphia on the 6th, did not arrive till 11 1/2 A. M. of the 7th. The contrac-

tor is informed that the department will impose fines, and he is requested to inform the agent of the railroad, where the trouble seems to lie.

December 27, 1834, the postmaster at Baltimore is informed that arrangements have been made with the contractors to send a second mail from Washington to Philadelphia, by way of York, Columbia, *and the railroad*, to start from Washington at three A. M., from Baltimore at nine A. M., and reach Philadelphia by six next morning—twenty-seven hours, Washington to Philadelphia.

A Boston traveler, in October, 1834, writing to the Boston Atlas from Pittsburg, says:

"We left Philadelphia on the morning of the 6th in a railroad car, and reached Columbia, on the Susquehanna, at dusk; distance, eighty-two miles. The car was drawn by horses; but on the 9th, as I was informed, the second track was to have been completed, when a locomotive steam-engine was to be substituted, and the distance would be run over in between six and seven hours.

"This railroad has been constructed by the State of Pennsylvania. The rails are laid on blocks of stone, and the whole of the work has been well executed. There are two inclined planes to overcome a height of nearly 200 feet at each terminus, the first to ascend from the vale of the Schuylkill and the other to descend into that of the Susquehanna at Columbia.

"But a few years since it required as long a time to go from Boston to the State of Ohio as to make a voyage to Europe; and keel boats from New Orleans could not reach Louisville in less than from ninety to a hundred days; but by the invention of steamboats, the construction of canals and railroads, and the use of locomotives, the journey may be performed next summer from Boston to Saint, Louis, a distance of over 1,900 miles, in from fourteen to fifteen days, and at an expense of not more than \$50, and this, too, without passing *a single mile in stages over a common road*.

"Such are the glorious advantages of internal improvements."

At this time grave doubts were entertained as to whether the railway service could ever be made acceptable

to the public or the department and frequent threats are on record that the contractors will be remanded to the stage coaches.

February 18, 1835, on account of many complaints of gross irregularity in the transportation of the newspaper mail between Philadelphia and Harrisburg and Carlisle, the contractors were informed by the department that if the irregularities were repeated "this mode of transportation by the railroad must be at once abandoned, and you will be required to resume your double daily line of four-horse post coaches between Philadelphia and Chambersburg."

March 27, 1835, a letter from the department reveals the fact that the contractors, after having used the railroad from Baltimore to Frederick for some time, ask permission to resume their trips by stage-coach. On this request the postmaster general made the following indorsement:

"The contractors will go by railroad or otherwise, so that the mail is carried in due time."

A letter addressed by the department, March 28, 1835, to James Reeside, contractor, complains that—

"The mail from New York to Philadelphia, by railroad, is usually late, taking more than thirteen hours from Jersey City. * * * This was hardly the case in the worst of bad staging."

The intimation is given to the contractor that a repetition of these evils will be followed by directions from the department to abandon this mode of conveyance, and to resume his former route—that is, go back from the railway to the stages. April 30, 1835.

"There have been two failures of the mail from beyond Philadelphia, at this city, in the course of the present week, occasioned, it is said, by accidents to the locomotive on the Amboy and Camden Railroad.

"These occurrences are peculiarly annoying at this time, and have become the subject of public notice and complaint.

"From the experiences we have had the adaptation of the railroad to the purposes of mail transportation is becoming every day more and more questionable.

"It is very apparent that it cannot be relied on with that degree of certainty which is all important in the transmission of the mail, and without which disappointments occur to the public and complaints are rung in the ears of the department from every quarter of the country."

The early notices of acceptance of proposals on lines where railroads were in course of construction were many of them qualified by the phrase:

"On condition that in case any arrangement shall hereafter be made under the authority of Congress to carry the mail for the whole or any part of the route on railroad, then your contract to be annulled, or there shall be a pro rata deduction as the case may be."

February 26, 1836, the contractor on route between Augusta and Charleston is authorized to make a subcontract with the railroad company, if he desires to do so.

The letter notifying the contractor says:

"The postmaster general will not object to your making a subcontract with the railroad company, provided all the offices be supplied, and provided the expedition furnished by the railroad involve no extra expense."

Among the archives of the Postoffice Department are found old contracts, which were among the earliest made directly with the railroads. These contracts are made by using the blanks for stage coach service, erasures and interlineations adapting them to the new order of things.

The very earliest railroad service seems to have been performed by the railroads for the contractors, who had agreed with the department to carry the mails for four years. During the performance of these contracts certain sections of railroad were completed, and the contractors, by consent of the department, made their own arrangements with the roads to have the mails conveyed more expeditiously. It was later that the roads were invited to make proposals, and only recently that the custom of making contracts with the roads has been abandoned.

At one time in the history of the department a serious rupture was threatened, through an attempt made by the postmaster general to compel all the railroad companies to execute contracts with the postoffice department.

Old advertisements indicate that at first the department used precisely the same form in asking for proposals to carry the mails in cars as in stages, without any reference to the absence of competition.

For a long time the formality of advertising for bids was observed in the case of railroad service, though it was well known that there could not possibly be any competition.

The postmaster general, in his annual report for 1843, suggests that it is idle to advertise for bids since there is no competition, and by a joint resolution of Congress February 20, 1845, the postmaster general was authorized to contract with any railroad company without advertising for bids as the previous law required.

These references, and extracts from the early records, which might have been multiplied indefinitely, have been made at some length because they are necessary to understand the first steps in an arm of the postal service which has become so important to every domestic and business interest of the country.

The following act of Congress made every railroad in the country, or to be built thereafter, a post-route.

And be it further enacted, That each and every railroad within the limits of the United States, which now is, or hereafter may be, made and completed, shall be a post-route; and the postmaster general shall cause the mail to be transported thereon, provided he can have it done upon reasonable terms, and not paying therefor, in any instance, more than twenty-five per centum over and above what similar transportation would cost in post-coaches.

Approved July 7, 1838.

CHAPTER VII.

EARLY MAIL CONTRACTS.

Some light will be thrown on the transition period we are now considering by a glance at the earliest contracts made with the railroad companies for transportation of the mails.

In a list of contracts made in 1831, to take effect 1st January, 1832, for the three years following, furnished the Speaker of the House by Postmaster General Barry, April 18, 1832, we find no mention as yet of any kind of service on post-roads except stages, sulkies, four-horse post-coaches, horseback, packets, and steamboats.

In March, 1823, all waters on which steamboats regularly pass from port to port were, by act of Congress, established as post-roads; and in July, 1836, the postmaster general was authorized to contract for carrying the mail on the navigable canals of the several States, and such canals were declared to be post-roads. It is significant that the act of July, 1836, regulating the post-office department, containing forty-six sections, contains no intimation of any transportation by railroad.

In 1833 the annual transportation of the mail was 17,693,839 miles in stages, 628,737 miles in steamboats, and 8,531,909 miles on horseback and in sulkies. There is no intimation as yet of the new carrier that is shortly to enter and distance all competitors. We know that there were in operation about 400 miles of railway at this time, in broken sections, without length or rapidity sufficient to claim the attention of the postoffice department. No direct contracts had as yet been executed; the mail was carried on cars by individual contractors. It is in this year that we find the postmaster general making a report to the Senate of all extra allowances made on contracts during the five years preceding.

The first mention of the railway as a possible mode of mail communication in the annual reports of the postoffice department occurs in the year 1834.

The Postmaster General, Mr. W. T. Barry, in an annual report, the whole of which occupies five meager pages, takes up one of these pages in discussing the advisability of employing the railroads to convey the mails. This page, from this old report, is of such interest that it is quoted entire.

"The celerity of the mail should always be equal to the most rapid transition of the traveler; and that which shortens the time of communication, and facilitates the intercourse between distant places, is like bringing them nearer together; while it affords convenience to men of business, it tends to counteract local prejudices by enlarging the sphere of acquaintance. These considerations have always had their full weight upon my mind in making improvements in mail operations. The multiplication of railroads in different parts of the country promises, within a few years, to give great rapidity to the movements of travelers, and it is a subject worthy of inquiry, whether measures may not now be taken to secure the transportation of the mail upon them. Already have the railroads between Frenchtown, in Maryland, and New Castle, in Delaware, and between Camden and South Amboy, in New Jersey, afforded great and important facilities to the transmission of the great Eastern mail.

"The railroad between this city and Baltimore will soon be completed, and the distance from the postoffice in this place to that of Baltimore will not be materially varied from the present road, thirty-eight miles. From Baltimore, by Port Deposit, in Maryland, to Coatesville, in Pennsylvania, the line for a railroad is located, and the stock subscribed for its completion, and from Coatesville to Philadelphia a railroad is made and in operation. The distance between Baltimore and Philadelphia on this road will be 117 miles, about 18 miles greater than the present land route. From Philadelphia to Trenton bridge, about twenty-eight miles, the railroad is nearly completed, and from New Brunswick, in Jersey, to Jersey City, on the west side of the Hudson River, opposite the city of

New York, thirty miles, the railroad is in a state of progress. When these works shall be completed, the only interval will be between Trenton and New Brunswick, about twenty-six miles, to complete an entire railroad between this place and the city of New York, and it cannot be supposed that the enterprising State of New Jersey will long delay to perfect a communication of such great importance, passing through most of her largest and most flourishing towns.

"When this shall be done, the whole distance between this city and New York on a continuous railroad, will not exceed 240 miles, and the journey may be performed at all times with certainty, allowing ample time for stopping at important places on the road, in sixteen hours, and ordinarily in a shorter period.

"If provision can be made to secure the regular transportation of the mail upon this and upon other railroads which are constructing, and in some instances already finished, it will be of great utility to the public, otherwise these corporations may become exorbitant in their demands, and prove eventually to be dangerous monopolies."

From all that has followed it does not appear that Postmaster General Barry was at all extravagant in his anticipations. The earliest legislation by Congress as to pay being in 1838, all that precedes that date is fragmentary and was done by the department under the old contract system.

It will be noted from these transcripts from the old postoffice journals and contracts that the change was made from the stage-coach to rail-car after no fixed rule. Sometimes the contractor made his own arrangements with the railroad company; sometimes the old contract was simply transferred to the company at the same rates; sometimes the compensation was divided pro rata so far as the railroad covered the route; sometimes the postmaster in a large city made the arrangements for the department.

In 1840 the postmaster general reports to the House of Representatives that defective railroads are the source of continual irregularity, yet the department is obliged to

resort to them because it cannot procure a service generally so rapid and satisfactory. All this goes to show that, as we have already said, the Railway Mail Service has been a growth. Some of the most valuable aids to the service were at first deemed useless innovations. The department was compelled to feel its way slowly on many lines of improvement, adapting itself gradually to a new order of things. Mistakes were made, conflicts arose, anomalies fastened themselves upon the service which it required years to correct, a nomenclature grew up naturally with the development of the service which became meaningless in the course of time, and required an act of Congress to abolish it. It is only after this date that we are able to find a full journal of daily transactions of business. A careful study of the postal methods of those days reveals some curious facts. We find an old advertisement soliciting bids for service between New York and Philadelphia:

"Ninety miles and back every day in four-horse post-coaches; to leave New York every day at 3 p. m., arrive at Philadelphia next day at 6 a. m.; leave Philadelphia every day at 3 p. m., and arrive at New York next day at 6 a. m."

In response to this advertisement the Union Line Stage Company offer to carry the mail for \$13,200 for the first four years, and for the remaining three years they offer to carry it by the steamboats, and by the Camden and Amboy Railroad in nine hours instead of fifteen, as in the advertisement. Another bidder agrees to carry the mail with as much speed as man and horses or machinery will allow, whether on the railroad when completed, or any part of it. This is in 1831, showing that the period was coming when railroads were to be utilized in carrying the mails, but indicating that the contractor with the government must have been also a contractor with the railroad. Another bid contains a sentence like the following, dated Washington, September 26, 1831:

"The railroad will in all probability be completed from Bordentown to Amboy by the 1st of September, 1832. In that case the contractors would then commence con-

veying the mails by that conveyance, if agreeable to the postoffice department."

In compliance with a resolution of Congress the postmaster general furnished in 1836 a list of all contracts made by him between January 1 and July 1, 1836, for the transportation of the mails.

In that list we find only one mention of any railroad transportation, which is on the route, from Philadelphia to Mauch Chunk, Pa., 117 miles, the service to be performed twice daily between Philadelphia and Reading, fifty-eight miles; daily from Reading to Port Carbon, and tri-weekly from Port Carbon to Mauch Chunk. Contract for four years at \$3,000 per annum. Also a clause began to be inserted, in the printed forms, rendered necessary by the anomalies of the service at this time, reading as follows:

"That he shall not, by himself or his agent, transmit or be concerned in transmitting, commercial intelligence more rapidly than by mail."

This clause still remains in the present printed contracts, though it must long since have become a dead letter, through the telegraph and telephone.

In every contract executed at this date was a clause directing that when the mail was carried on horseback or in a vehicle other than a stage, "It shall be covered securely with an oil-cloth or bear-skin against rain or snow, under a penalty of \$20 for each time the mail is wet."

Beginning with the year 1835 we find a regularly-kept postoffice journal, the absence of which for previous years may be accounted for by the fire about this time that destroyed many of the records of the office, or by the negligence heretofore mentioned.

At this date about a thousand miles of railway had been built, on less than half of which was the mail carried regularly. This official recognition, as being the earliest, is of interest, showing by the classification that the railroads were now becoming an element to be considered in the matter of transportation.

CHAPTER VIII.

FIRST DECADE OF THE RAILROAD.

1835 TO 1845.

The annual report of the postmaster general for 1835 contains the first mention of mail transportation by railway. This report refers to the great facilities afforded by the railroads in transmission of the great Eastern mail. Still it is to be noted that in the preceding paragraph which gives the miles of transportation annually, and the methods, the railroads are not mentioned, being as yet too insignificant as compared with the transportation by stage, steamboat, sulky, and horseback.

A circular was addressed, March 10, 1835, by the postmaster general to all the postmasters of Pennsylvania, Ohio, Maryland, New Jersey, Delaware, and Michigan Territory, asking for the best information that could be given as to the amount of service to be required on the several routes soon to be advertised in the middle section of the United States, comprising the above-named States. Before preparing his advertisement for proposals the postmaster general desires information as to whether the mail shall be carried on horseback, in sulkies, two-horse stages, or four-horse coaches. He makes no mention of the railway in the enumeration of the possible methods of conveyance to continue in operation the ensuing four years, from January 1, 1836; though we know from other sources that in the year 1836 the mails were carried on at least 200 miles of railway. In the annual report for that year the question is raised whether a mode of exchanging mail-bags without stopping the cars might not be introduced.

The country is congratulated by the postmaster general that the time occupied in passing from Washington to Baltimore is but two and one-half hours, and the time occupied in transmitting mail from Washington to Bos-

ton is about thirty-nine hours. The result of these earliest attempts to take advantage of improved facilities in transporting the mails is well summed up in the report of the postmaster general for 1835:

"The multiplication of railroads will form a new era in the mail establishment. They must soon become the means by which the mails will be transported on most of the great lines of intercommunication, and the undersigned has devoted some attention to the devising of a system which shall render the change most useful to the country.

"The cities and large towns on the great lines constitute centers from which the mails diverge, to pervade and supply the surrounding country. If any intermediate offices be supplied by the railroads, it should be those only where the cars stop, unless a mode of exchanging mail bags without stopping can be introduced for the accommodation of others.

"The means of transportation between Washington and Boston are now so complete, that this system might be advantageously introduced at least during the season of steamboat navigation. The time occupied in passing from Washington to Baltimore, by the railroad, is but two and a half hours. To pass from Baltimore to Philadelphia by steamboats, and the Newcastle and Frenchtown railroad, requires about nine hours. From Philadelphia to New York by the Camden and Amboy railroad and steamboats, occupies about eight hours; from New York to Providence about fifteen hours; and from Providence to Boston, two and a half hours. The traveling hours from Washington to Boston are about thirty-seven. Allowing half an hour at Baltimore, Philadelphia, New York, and Providence, each, for exchanging of mails, the time occupied in transmitting a mail from Washington to Boston would be thirty-nine hours. This is the speed of present conveyances.

In the course of the next year it is expected that Baltimore and Philadelphia will be connected by railroad, when the time occupied in passing from city to city will not exceed six hours. New York will soon be connected with Boston by similar roads, when the time occupied between will not exceed fifteen hours. So that when a railroad

line from Washington to Boston shall be completed a mail may pass from the one to the other in thirty-four hour at most; and probably, in a few years, from the progressive improvements of locomotives, in less than thirty hours.

"Within the quarter of the Union embraced in the recent letting of contracts there are several railroads. Some of them made no offers, and the rest demanded prices far beyond the usual cost of transporting the mails on the same routes heretofore, and beyond what was asked by individual citizens. Anxious to give the mails the greatest possible expedition between Washington and New York, the undersigned made an effort to bring the companies, in whose hands are the means of conveyance on that great line, to act in concert with each other and with the Department, by which means two daily mails might be run through that line, performing the trip each way, and conveying passengers from city to city in about twenty-three hours.

"The effort failed in consequence of the very heavy compensation asked by them."

"The company owning the railroad between Washington and Baltimore demanded \$10,000, or about \$250 per mile, merely to haul one daily mail from depot to depot, without other responsibility; and \$14,000 for two daily mails.

"The companies owning the several railroads now constructing from Baltimore to Philadelphia demanded \$30,000, or upwards of \$320 per mile, to haul one daily mail from city to city.

"The company owning the Camden and Amboy road demanded \$26,000, or near \$300 per mile, for one daily mail, and \$3,000 for a second.

"Aware that the committee on the postoffice and postroads of the House of Representatives had had the subject of the transportation of the mails on railroads under consideration at the last session, and had unanimously proposed to restrict the department to \$75 per mile for the service; and moreover, considering the sums demanded disproportionate to the service, and wholly unreasonable,

the undersigned determined not to accept any of the propositions.

"To leave no means unessayed, however, to form a satisfactory arrangement, he offered a contract for merely hauling a box containing the mail from depot to depot daily to the Baltimore and Washington Railroad Company at \$100 a mile, which they promptly declined.

"The undersigned does not intend to pay the prices demanded by these companies, unless directed to do so by those who have a right to control him. He will sooner put post-coaches or mail-wagons on the old roads and run them there until public opinion, or the voice of superior authority, induces the associations, which have been permitted to monopolize the means of speedy conveyance on these routes, to abate in their terms. The Boston and Providence Railroad Company have intimated a willingness to carry two daily mails between those cities, embracing the New York steamboat mail, for \$2,000 a year, being at the rate of about \$25 per mile for a single mail, and a contract has been authorized."

An interesting episode in the early history of railway mail transportation, is found fully detailed in the report of the postmaster general for 1835. Annexed to the annual report for that year are sundry letters under the general heading "Railroad Documents," comprising the letter of instructions from Mr. Kendall, then postmaster general, to P. S. Loughborough, requesting him to wait upon the president and other managers of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad Company in order to make some arrangements whereby the mail between Washington and Baltimore can be transported on terms which shall be satisfactory to all parties, and promise to be permanent. This letter is full of interest, and discloses to us better than any other single document the small beginnings of the railroad service, and the almost grotesque notions entertained at that time as to what relations might be entered into between the department and the railways. After suggesting that the railroad company might be asked to close in some portion of their baggage car, a strong lock being placed on the apartment, to which only the post-

masters at Washington and Baltimore should have keys, the postmaster general makes this proposal:

"The department will furnish a strong fire-proof box or chest, so constructed that it may be readily transferred from a wagon to a car prepared for the purpose, into which the entire mails shall be put and locked up at one postoffice, not to be molested or opened between the two cities, which shall be delivered and received at the depots of the road, without any service or responsibility on the part of the company, beyond the transportation from one depot to the other. Or if wheels can be constructed which can be used alike upon the railroad and the streets of the cities, respectively, the department will furnish an entire car containing the mails, to be delivered at one depot and received at the other, asking nothing of the company but to haul it from one to the other."

Later in the letter one other method of settling matters is suggested, which consists in the department undertaking to run its own locomotives:

"May not the department fulfill the law and accomplish its object by placing locomotives upon the road for the purpose of conveying the mail, to which everything else must give place? If it be not so, and if these railroad companies may refuse to carry the mails at the hours required in the execution of the laws, or may by any means, direct or indirect, prevent their transportation, then may they obstruct, if not defeat, one of the powers unquestionably delegated to Congress. For it must be apparent to the most casual observer that if the mails are driven from the railroad, and obliged to depend on stage or horse transportation on the main routes, they will soon cease to be of any considerable value, and this important and useful branch of the government will sink into contempt."

It would seem from the correspondence that Mr. Loughborough, acting on the hint contained in the question above, addressed a letter to the presidents of the several roads, asking whether an arrangement could be made with the companies represented by them by which the postoffice department could acquire the right of running its own car upon the road for the conveyance of the

mail and guard only, as often and at such hours as it shall prescribe, with the use of the depots, water-stands, etc.; and if so, for what consideration the companies would grant such rights to the department during the existence of their charters. It is almost needless to add that the companies all with one consent declined to entertain any propositions that would allow the department to run its own engine and cars on their roads. The director of the Philadelphia and Trenton company says:

"Such an arrangement would virtually subject all the operations of the company in the use of the road to the control of the department. Their times and seasons would indeed be no longer in their own hands while such a connection existed, and in my judgment the arrangement would not prove beneficial to either party."

These documents are out of print, and, being part of the earliest history of the relations between the department and railways, are of peculiar interest. In the year 1836 we find steamboats, which had been carrying the mails for some years and railroad cars treated under one head for first time also.

In this year also the postmaster general calls attention to the fact that an amendment to the law is necessary in reference to the mode of making contracts with the railroad companies, in view of the fact that the manner of making contracts then in vogue presupposes the existence of competition in bidding. After successive recommendations for several years the amendment here suggested, in the form of a joint resolution authorizing the postmaster general to contract with railroad companies in certain cases without advertising for proposals, was passed and approved February 20, 1845.

In the report of the postmaster general, dated December 4, 1837, a table is presented showing the improvements in the service from 1835 to 1837. This table contains a double column showing the time from New York to various points in 1835 and in 1837.

"The following improvements have been made in the time of transmitting intelligence within the past two years, viz:

From New York—	1835	1837
	<i>h. m.</i>	<i>h. m.</i>
To Washington, D. C.....	32 00	24 00
Richmond, Va.....	61 00	37 30
Raleigh, N. C.....	94 30	55 00
Columbus, S. C.....	147 00	77 00
Charleston, S. C.....	163 00	88 30
Milledgeville, Ga.....	183 00	93 30
Montgomery, Ala.....	242 00	115 00
Mobile, Ala.....	300 00	137 00
New Orleans, La.....	331 00	163 00
Wheeling, Va.....	83 00	56 00
Columbus, Ohio.....	112 00	70 30
Indianapolis, Ind.....	182 00	91 30
Vandalia, Ill.....	279 00	111 30
Saint Louis, Mo.....	322 00	119 30
Cincinnati, Ohio.....	137 00	86 00
Louisville, Ky.....	186 00	104 00
Nashville, Tenn.....	236 00	126 00
Huntsville, Ala.....	310 00	140 30

To understand what railroading was in 1838, when Congress enacted its first legislation concerning mail conveyance by rail, it may help us to recall an advertisement of the Baltimore and Ohio, the only road then, and for many years after, coming into the capital.

The advertisement notifies the people of Washington that after the following Monday the morning train (there were but two daily trains) would leave at 9 o'clock, "to render certain the arrival of the train at Baltimore early enough to afford ample time for passengers going North to take the steamboat, which now departs for Philadelphia at 12.30 o'clock." A little later on the hour is again changed to 6 a. m. to enable passengers to reach New York in one day. The time now required to go from Washington to Baltimore is forty-five minutes.

In 1838 the postmaster general addressed a letter to the postoffice committee of the House of Representatives, in which he says:

"The mail which leaves New York daily for the South is believed to average nearly *two tons in weight*, more than a ton and a half of which is printed matter. At Baltimore it separates, and about half goes West and the

other half South. It is now difficult to carry it by other than steam power, or the use of railroads. The stage lines where the roads are not highly improved, are impeded, delayed, and often broken-down with this increasing weight, delaying and sometimes losing the letter mails, and always endangering their valuable contents. Indeed, when one travels upon these lines, and sees how the mails are piled on and in the stages, and how they are necessarily handled and exposed, he cannot but marvel that such vast sums of money and so many valuable papers are hazarded in them at all. He cannot but be impressed with the folly of attempting to convey these heavy masses with the speed required at this age for business correspondence, and with the bad policy of so legislating as to increase them, especially when no general interest is to be promoted thereby. Indeed, but for the redeeming power of railroads, it would become necessary, in the present tendency of things, to give up the hope of transmitting letters and newspapers with the same speed, and cause them to be conveyed in separate lines. But if the railroads relieve the department on some lines, they leave it to all its embarrassments on others; and the relief which they give is at an increase of expense, which the accumulating matter they convey will go but a short distance to remunerate."

In this year, 1838, the weight of all mails sent during one week in the month of June, in the cities of New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Washington, and Richmond, was 55,241 pounds; the newspapers weighing 44,468 pounds, the periodicals 8,837 pounds, and the letters 1,922 pounds.

In the light of the fact that at present eighty tons of mail matter pass daily between New York and Philadelphia over the Pennsylvania Railroad, these figures, showing that the weight of all mails originating in the five chief cities of the Union, was but four tons daily, are of exceeding interest.

In 1839 the postmaster general complains that the great mail for the South and West is detained from six to eight hours in Philadelphia. In order to put an end to this delay he offered the maximum amount allowed by law (\$300

per mile), on condition that the department should have two mails a day from New York to Washington, one connecting at Philadelphia with the night line from New York, and the other with the morning line. This offer was declined by the railroad, whose officers signified their willingness to carry only one daily mail, and that at hours most convenient for their other business. For this meager and most unsatisfactory service the maximum of \$300 per mile was demanded.

About this time the postmaster general dispatched one of his special agents to Europe with instructions to inquire into the postal methods of other countries. Mr. George Plitt was designated to perform this duty, and a report of his labors is found in a supplement to the annual report of the postmaster general for 1840. In the course of this report mention is made of railway postoffices. Under this heading Mr. Plitt says, in regard to the transportation of mail in England:

RAILWAY POSTOFFICES IN ENGLAND.

"Each railway company provides a separate car, when desired to do so by the postmaster general, for the exclusive use of the mails. As with us, these cars are fitted up with boxes, to facilitate the distribution and reception of the way-mails. On the London and Liverpool road it requires the constant and active employment of *two clerks* to assort, receive, and hand out the mails, such is the rapidity of travel, and so numerous are the postoffices upon this route. No letters or papers are received at the cars and mailed as with us. Everything must come through the postoffice.

"To all the mail cars there is an ingenious machine attached, intended to catch and drop a mail at the same time, at places where the train would not otherwise be obliged to stop. This I have seen successfully done several times, while traveling at the rate of 30 miles an hour; but it has been frequently known to fail, the mail to be taken in dropping upon the road and the train proceeding without it. Such mail, however, would be picked up and forwarded by the next train, by an officer stationed to receive the mail left."

It was in this first period of mail transportation by railway that an abuse sprang up which gave the department considerable trouble before it was corrected, namely, the illegal transportation of mail matter on the several railroads which had been declared post-roads. In his annual report, for 1842, the postmaster general complains that, in violation of law, there are to be found individuals engaged in the transportation of mail matter upon most of the railroads in the United States, over which the mail is transported at an immense expense to the government. It is further urged, in the same report, that the government ought to purchase the perpetual right to control the railroads.

"Since justice and policy alike require the government to send the mail by the most expeditious means of conveyance, and since none can be created equal to the railroads, the United States ought to buy the right to control the companies, which have their corporate existence by State enactments, and cannot therefore be controlled by legislation of the general government.

"The plan which I proposed was, that Congress should authorize the department to purchase this right, enter into the stipulations of a contract with the companies, and report these contracts, as made from time to time, to Congress, to be binding only when ratified by Congress."

Impossible and chimerical as such a means of settling this vexed question would now seem, it could have probably been cheaply effected with many of the leading roads in those early days, when neither the department nor the railroads were able to foresee to what proportions this service would in time grow. There is on file in the archives of the department a letter from the president of the Philadelphia, Wilmington and Baltimore Railroad Company, written November 12, 1841, a year in advance of the report under consideration, in which he proposes to the postmaster general that the government shall acquire a perpetual interest in his road. His exact language may be of some interest in this connection:

"Let the government issue scrip to the amount of \$1,000,000, at 5 per cent., to our company, payable in twenty or thirty years, and, in return, have the perpetual con-

trol of the road as far as one mail daily line is wanted, and at such hour as the department might direct. This would save an immense trouble in making new contracts and new engagements, as every year additional weight and importance will be attached to the mail on so important a route. I have no doubt in a few years the department will have to pay \$50,000 or more for the transportation of the mails."

An important item in the history of the transportation of mail by railway comes up in the annual report for 1843, in connection with Private Expresses. A great decline had been noted in the revenue of the department, and the postmaster general, in seeking for the causes of this falling off in postal receipts, finds the principal cause in "the operations of the numerous private posts, under the name of expresses, which have sprung into existence within the past few years, extending themselves over the mail-routes between the principal cities and towns *by which and at which the railroads pass and terminate.*" These private posts were engaged in transporting letters and mail-matter for pay, greatly reducing the revenues of the department. Fastening themselves like leeches upon the lines where the amount of correspondence was great and the communication easy, passing by all poor and unprofitable lines, they sucked the very life out of the exchequer, making self support an impossibility.

Prosecution was made against all the offenders, but in the test case against Adams & Co. the defendants were acquitted, owing to a defect in the laws.

In this first decade the people of the country seemed scarcely to realize the changes that were to come about through the general introduction of railways. At this time there was not a through line in any direction, and no prospect of any. There were broken sections of single track between neighboring cities, the usual speed being from twelve to fifteen miles per hour, and as late as 1838, the year when the few railroads that were in operation were declared by Congress to be post-roads, we find Mr. Corwin saying in the House of Representatives, in a debate on the Cumberland road:

"I hope I may, without offense, suppose it possible that at some distant day this very road, paved from the Atlantic to the Mississippi, shall be crowded with commerce and groan beneath its load of travel."

That is to say, by a great stretch of his imagination he could picture a time when there should be a public paved highway from the Atlantic to the Mississippi; but his wildest dream did not contemplate an iron road between those points. As already intimated, the first legislation to pay for mail transportation was made in 1838, and modified in 1839. The first acts of Parliament providing for the conveyance of mails by railroad companies originated in the same years, and, as might have been expected, the development of the railway mail service in the United States and in England has had very much the same history.

CHAPTER IX.

TELEGRAPH AND RAILROAD IN FULL SWING.

In entering on the second decade of the history of the Railway Mail Service we find at the outset two important changes. One is the act of Congress authorizing the postmaster general to classify railroads and make a new rate of pay according to classification. The other is the successful experiment with the electric telegraph. So important a factor was this new force in the development of railroads that it is but fair to say the present system of railways could not be maintained an hour without the telegraph. So intimate has been the connection between the railway and the telegraph in their mutual development, both having a bearing upon the development of the postal system, that a further reference to the electric telegraph will not be out of place.

As the art of making paper from rags was a necessary supplement to the art of printing, so the telegraph supplemented the railway. As railways multiplied telegraphy was discovered and perfected. At present they are so interlinked that it would not be possible to maintain the perfect railway and postal system of the country apart from the telegraphic system.

Yet so visionary and absurd was the experiment deemed that when it came before Congress it was treated with ridicule and likened to animal magnetism. The following from the Congressional Globe, of February 28, and March 1, 1843, will not be without interest:

ELECTRO AND ANIMAL MAGNETISM.

"On motion of Mr. Kennedy, of Maryland, the committee took up the bill to authorize a series of experiments to be made, in order to test the merits of Morse's electro-magnetic telegraph. The bill appropriates \$30,000 to be expended under the direction of the postmaster general.

"On motion of Mr. K., the words 'Postmaster General' were stricken out, and 'Secretary of the Treasury' inserted.

Mr. Cave Johnson wished to have a word to say upon this bill. As the present Congress had done much to encourage science, he did not wish to see the science of mesmerism neglected and overlooked. He therefore proposed that one-half of the appropriation be given to Mr. Fisk to enable him to carry on experiments, as well as Professor Morse.

"Mr. Houston thought that Millerism should be included in the benefits of the appropriation.

"Mr. Stanley said he should have no objection to the appropriation for mesmeric experiments, provided the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. Cave Johnson) was the subject. [A laugh.]

Mr. Cave Johnson said he should have no objection, provided the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. Stanley) was the operator. [Great laughter.]

"Several gentlemen called for the reading of the amendment; and it was read by the clerk, as follows:

"*Provided*, That one-half of the said sum shall be appropriated for trying mesmeric experiments, under the direction of the Secretary of the Treasury."

"Mr. S. Mason rose to a question of order. He maintained that the amendment was not *bona fide*, and that such amendments were calculated to injure the character of the House. He appealed to the chair to rule the amendment out of order.

The chairman said it was not for him to judge of the motives of members in offering amendments; and he could not, therefore, undertake to pronounce the amendment not *bona fide*. Objections might be raised to it on the ground that it was not sufficiently analogous in character to the bill under consideration; but, in the opinion of the chair, it would require a scientific analysis to determine how far the magnetism of mesmerism was analogous to that to be employed in telegraphs. [Laughter.] He therefore ruled the amendment in order.

"On taking the vote, the amendment was rejected—ayes 22, noes not counted.

"The bill was then laid aside to be reported. * * *

ELECTRO-MAGNETIC TELEGRAPH.

"On motion by Mr. J. P. Kennedy, the bill making appropriations to test the value of Morse's electro-magnetic telegraph was taken up, and, under the operation of the previous question, passed—ayes 89, noes, 83."

So ironical is fate that Hon. Cave Johnson, who laughingly compared the Morse magnetic telegraph to Mr. Fisk's mesmerism as quoted above only two years later, having meantime become postmaster general, has this to say in his annual report:

"I deem it my duty to bring to your notice the fact that the subject of telegraphic communications in their fullest extent, as made available by means of this extraordinary invention, is forcing itself upon the attention of the public. The proprietors of the patent securing the exclusive use of the telegraph have since the last Congress taken the most active measures to establish lines of communication between the principal cities of the Union. Their success will introduce a means of communicating intelligence amply sufficient for a great variety of purposes, and greatly superior in dispatch to those of the public mails, and must secure to itself much of the business that has heretofore been transacted through them, and to that extent diminish the revenues of the department. It becomes, then, a question of great importance, how far the government will allow individuals to divide with it the business of transmitting intelligence—an important duty, confided to it by the Constitution, necessarily and properly exclusive."

The year 1855 opened with a total annual transportation by railroad of nearly 20,000,000 miles, costing about ten cents per mile. New distribution schemes had been completed and forwarded to all of the fifty distributing offices. To form some idea of the cumbrous nature of the methods then in vogue, it is only necessary to recall that each distributing officer was required to be familiar with the instructions as to the proper distribution of mail matter for every portion of every State in the Union. At that time there were one thousand six hundred and forty-five counties, formed into seven hundred and fifty-seven

different groups to suit the several distributing offices, showing the course of the mail from each office to every county in the Union, and the whole number of points thus indicated for the fifty distributing offices was 82,250. In the following year mention is made of the very rapid rate at which the railroad service is increasing, showing the growth of the country and the enterprise of its citizens. From 1842 to 1852 the number of miles on which mail was conveyed by rail had increased from 3,000 to 10,000 miles. From 1852 to 1856 the railroad service was increased another 10,000 miles, thus doubling in four years. The average cost had fallen from \$125 per mile in 1852 to \$101 in 1856. 360 route agents and 34 local agents performed all the work required in handling the mail for the whole country.

In 1857, under postmaster general Brown, an improvement was attempted in methods of railway mail transportation which deserves mention as indicative of some desire for progress. This consisted in the appointment of express agents, whose duties were to facilitate mail connections in important cities, guard against mistakes and losses, through a regular system of accountability.

"Its main features are, briefly, as follows: In the post-offices at the ends of each separate route, as apportioned to mail agents (say Washington and Philadelphia), and at the prominent intermediate points, lists are kept showing the pouches forwarded, which lists are receipted by the route or mail agent, who thus becomes directly responsible for a certain number of pouches for certain specified points. Upon delivering the same into postoffices, to mail messengers, or to an agent on a connecting route, he takes receipts to show the fulfillment of his duties. In addition, it is required, on some routes, that full and careful accounts be kept, in book form, of all pouches, so as to show where they are received, how labeled, and how disposed of."

This favorite scheme, which was designed to expedite the mails and change the whole character of the Railway Mail Service, came to nothing.

In the next year the postmaster general reports the experiments with express mail agents as in successful opera-

tion, the mails going from Philadelphia to Chicago in about thirty-six hours; but in 1859 we find the whole subject disposed of by the statement that the experiment had not been justified in its practical workings, and a return to the old baggage-master system had been ordered at an annual saving of nearly \$20,000. This was certainly a disappointing sequel to a scheme which was thought to combine all possible elements and appliances to make the mail system perfect "as far as human agency can be effective to that end."

In an annual report as late as 1857 we are given a glimpse of the old-time mail service, when postmaster general Brown, in discussing the relative merits of the El Paso and Albuquerque routes to the Pacific says:

"The degree of cold on the Albuquerque route is not greater than on many of the stage-coach routes of the Atlantic States; not greater, perhaps, than between Philadelphia and Pittsburg or between Baltimore and Wheeling. * * * It requires but little effort to remember how uncertain during the winter season was the transportation of the mails when the roads were in their natural state, and with what extreme suffering from the cold, staging used to be performed between those cities, with all the advantages of short and well appointed stations for recruiting the energies of the benumbed and exhausted passengers."

In the year 1859 we find the total annual transportation of mails by railroads exceeding in amount any other single method of transportation. The annual report of this year shows us the postmaster general as making a strong effort to correct some of the evils that grew up in connection with the Railway Mail Service.

One grievance especially noted is the disposition of many of the railway companies to shun the obligations imposed on all other contractors in the service of the department. Complaint is made that out of the three hundred and eighteen railroad routes then existing in the United States one hundred and thirty-seven transport the mails without contract; the result of which was that they carried the mails when and as they pleased, departing and arriving at such hours and moving at such speed as

was agreeable to them. The following is from the Postmaster General's report for the year 1859 in regard to the railroads:

"With every disposition to deal with them most liberally, and with a full recognition of their value as postal agents, and of their incalculable power in developing the resources of our country and promoting the enterprises of its material civilization, still it is manifest that their present attitude—seemingly defiant in its tone, as it is disorganizing in its tendencies—cannot be endured without humiliation to the government and without serious peril to those great interests which it is the mission of this department to uphold and advance. If they can successfully maintain the position they now occupy, then they control at will the movements of the mails, and virtually the department is administered by them instead of its appointed head. Entertaining these views, proposals will be invited from the different railroads, and the companies will be notified that after the 31st day of March, 1860, the mails will be delivered to them on condition of their entering into formal agreements, containing on their part the usual stipulations for the faithful performance of the service."

The step here contemplated was, however, never taken, owing to the prospect of an early interference by Congress to enact a law prescribing the compensation and duties of the railroad companies as carriers of the mails. The same report makes mention of several facts as effecting the diminished revenues of the department in the years just preceding.

The substitution of costly railroad transportation upon many of the old and comparatively inexpensive routes was one item increasing the cost of the service. The rates of postage were reduced by the acts of 1845 and 1851, thereby reducing very materially, for a time at least, the revenues of the department. The introduction of telegraphic communication began to divert an appreciable amount of public and private correspondence from the mails.

The revenues for 1860 were \$8,000,000, the expenditures nearly \$15,000,000; leaving a deficiency of over

\$6,000,000. As the total annual cost of all railroad transportation for the postoffice department in 1860 was only about \$3,000,000, this large deficiency could not have been due alone to the excessive cost of railroad transportation. The deficiency for 1858 was \$5,235,677.15; for 1859, \$6,996,009.26;; for 1860, \$6,356,705.89. In 1902 the deficiency is 2 1-2 per cent. of the revenue; in 1859 it was 87 per cent. It is but justice to the postmaster general at that time, the Hon. Joseph Holt, to say that he perceived the maladministration of the Congress with which he had to deal, and the absolute need of placing the department upon a safer financial basis through retrenchment and reform. He began the work, the fruits of which appeared already in his own administration of the department, and it was carried on, as we shall see, tracing its history further, by able hands, until to-day in the expenditure of more than \$110,000,000 annually, with an annual charge for railway transportation alone doubling the total expenditures of the department in 1860, the affairs of the department are so nicely adjusted that the difference between receipts and expenditures becomes but a minute fraction in comparison with the gross sum involved.

The closing sentences of the Postmaster General's report for 1859 contained so much sound sense, that we cannot refrain from quoting them:

The postoffice department, in its ceaseless labors, pervades every channel of commerce and every theater of human enterprise, and while visiting, as it does kindly, every fireside, mingles with the throbbings of almost every heart in the land. In the amplitude of its beneficence it ministers to all climes and creeds and pursuits the same eager readiness and with equal fullness of fidelity. It is the delicate ear-trump through which alike nations and families and isolated individuals whisper their joys and sorrows, their convictions and their sympathies, to all who listen for their coming. Naturally enough such an institution has ever been and still is a cherished favorite with the American people. The country has constantly manifested the most intense solicitude for the preservation of its purity and the prosperity

of its administration, and it cannot now be disguised that the guilty abuse of its ministrations and the reckless waste of its hard-earned revenues, connected with the humiliations to which it has in consequence been exposed, have deeply and sadly impressed the public mind."

In the year 1860 an experiment was made for three months with a night mail between New York and Boston. This was one of the earliest attempts to unite several distinct companies, deriving their charters from as many different States, into one continuous line. The time between these two cities was thus reduced to nine hours, and a connection was made in New York with the morning mail from the South, which was expedited thirteen hours. Letters and passengers leaving Washington in the morning arrived in Boston in less than twenty-three hours. The following year the experiment is reported as having proved so satisfactory and successful that arrangements were made for its permanent continuance. And in the same connection the fact is noted that a night mail from New York to Washington had been added, making "the *third* daily direct and unbroken line of travel for mails and passengers from city to city, and at hours causing the least loss of business time."

At this point there is a great falling off in all methods of mail transportation for several years, owing to the discontinuance of service in many of the Southern States during the civil war. This is the only period from the beginning when there has been any falling off in the great annual increase in railway mail transportation.

We are now nearing the point in the history of the Railway Mail Service when a revolution is to take place in the method of handling mail.

As late as 1862 we find the committee on roads and canals making a report to the House of Representatives on the railroad facilities between New York and Washington, in which they say, appealing to the personal experience of members who have been obliged to travel between these cities, that "a more disagreeable, annoying, and unsatisfactory line of railroad, for the length and importance of it, is not to be found in the United States. From twelve to fourteen hours of time are commonly con-

sumed, when from seven to nine ought to be sufficient. Three changes of cars are inflicted on the great majority of passengers, where not one should be tolerated. A failure of trains to connect is frequently occurring, whereas no such break should be possible. On roads of inferior importance such facts might be regarded as only of local and individual concern; but existing on the most traveled and most vital thoroughfare in the Union, they assume the proportions of a national wrong."

This extract is made to show the disadvantages under which the Railway Mail Service labored, and the difficulties to be contended with; for manifestly the mail service could not be superior to the ordinary facilities of travel. The most that could be hoped was that "*the celerity of the mail should be equal to the most rapid transition of the traveler*," as one of the older annual reports quaintly expressed it.

In one sense the history of the Railway Mail Service covers the period from the day the first pouch was carried by rail, but for the first thirty years it is a history of transportation merely, how much mail was carried, how far, and how fast, or how slow. The true Railway Mail Service is much more recent. We can form some conception of what the service was in 1864 from the report made by G. W. Gaylor, a special agent of the department. This document gives the first intimation of limited trains. In it the superintendent of the New Jersey Railroad Company is represented as inclined to think favorably of the plan of a special train to convey the mails and four passenger cars, passage tickets for each train to be limited in number to two hundred, no other cars to be attached under any circumstances at any point on the line.

As a side light on the state of the service at this time we might cite the correspondence between the department and one of the leading railways on the line between New York and Washington. The company is remonstrated with in this correspondence because of the reports from the route agents that nearly every night dead bodies are placed in the mail crates between Philadelphia and New York, and mails packed around the coffins. The superintendent of the road, in consequence of this complaint,

issued an order forbidding such a manifest breach of good order.

With the close of the year 1865 we see the beginning of the end of freight methods and stage-coach ideas in dealing with the mail, and, a great advance is now taken in the inauguration of a new system of distribution of the mails while in transit. One wonders why this important step forward was not earlier taken. It is not because it had not been earlier suggested, since the postmaster general in his report for 1859, refers to such a system when comparing the rates paid for mail transportation by rail in the United States and in Canada, and explains that in Canada, for the lower rate per mile, a separate car is furnished by the companies, *"which is fitted up as a traveling postoffice, and serves for sorting and distributing the mails by the way."*

And even further back, in the report for 1840, there is a paragraph on "railway postoffices," as they existed in England. Special agents of the postoffice department had investigated the English system, and, strangely enough, reported against it, thereby retarding for a decade the adoption of the greatest reform in the whole history of postal affair, except the introduction of railroads.

The railway postoffice, "traveling postoffice," as styled in England, or "Le Bureau Ambulant," as styled in France, seems to have been first brought officially to the attention of the department in 1848, by Hon. Selah R. Hobbie, First Assistant Postmaster General, then in charge of the contract office.

In 1847 he was sent to Europe by the Postmaster General (Hon. Cave Johnson), to inquire into and report on the postal systems of England and France.

After his return he made an interesting report on the objects of his mission, and the same was communicated by the postmaster general to the House of Representatives, December 22, 1848, in compliance with a resolution calling for it.

In his report Mr. Hobbie described somewhat briefly the functions of the traveling postoffice in England. He was evidently not favorably impressed with its adapta-

bility to the postal service of this country at that time; and that fact probably accounts for his not having dwelt more at length upon that topic.

While he admitted it gave dispatch to the mails, he considered it too expensive for this department, adding, as a further objection, that "*our cars do not run with sufficient steadiness for so much clerkly work.*"

CHAPTER X.

DISTRIBUTING POSTOFFICE.

The term "railway postoffice" is applied to a car in which mail is distributed, assorted, and placed in bags for the proper offices. This distribution takes place en route, and this system, introduced in the decade of the sixties, took the place of the old system by which the mail was simply placed in the mail cars and carried from the point of receipt to some distributing office. Mail from the East destined for Ohio towns, for example, must stop over at Pittsburg and be assorted, while passengers destined for the same points went on to their destination. Thus it came about that passengers often arrived at their journey's end two or three days in advance of mail matter starting at the same time. So great was the revolution caused by this new agency, and so far-reaching its effects upon the business of the department, that we shall in another chapter go at some length into the question of its origin.

To understand fully the great advantages of the present methods of handling mail as compared with former methods, it will be necessary to glance at the abuses connected with what were known as distributing postoffices.

Distributing postoffices were instituted by act of Congress in the year 1810, and ratified by general regulation in the same year.

Thirty-five cities and towns were designated as distributing offices, and minute instructions are given as to the making up of the mail (and curiously each bundle of letters was called a mail). In 1857 the number of distributing postoffices had increased to fifty, and in the intervening years there had fastened upon the postal service very grave abuses. It came to pass that many letters intended for distributing postoffices found their way, through carelessness, into packages intended for delivery in the cities designated as "distributing offices."

Now, the first work of the clerks at the distributing post-office was to separate the mail for local delivery from the distribution packages (marked "Dis." or "D. P. O."), the latter being forwarded by the first connection. It often happened that after forwarding these "D. P. O." mails there would yet be found in the local mail many letters which should have been forwarded with the distribution mail. This led to frequent delays and annoyances, which are rendered impossible under present methods. It will also be apparent that the way was open for a more serious injury to the postal service by the commissioners allowed upon the amount of distribution at each distributing postoffice. It was to the interest of the postmasters to swell the amount of mails handled in these distributing offices, and by collusion they were able to make unnecessary commissions, and thus to diminish the revenue. For example, a letter mailed from Philadelphia to the western part of Pennsylvania, instead of being mailed direct, as the regulations required, would be sent to Baltimore, to be there distributed and subjected to a commission tax, then mailed back to Pennsylvania. Letters are on file rebuking postmasters for such errors, and calling their attention to the necessity of saving the expense incident to distribution mailing. The postmaster general, from time to time, called attention to these abuses.

It appears that Mr. Henry A. Burr, formerly the topographer of the department, was one of the first to advocate the necessity of abolishing the local distributing postoffices and substituting therefor the traveling postoffice system.

In the appendix to the annual report for 1850 the First Assistant Postmaster General points out the need of an important reform.

Again, the postmaster general in his annual report for 1854, says that the proper distribution of mail matter in a country so vast as ours, with so many mail routes and so many postoffices, is a subject attended with great difficulty, and to which attention has been frequently directed. He states that some letters, instead of having one or at most two distributions, have been distributed four or five times before their arrival at the destined point, in consequence of which the distribution and delivery commissions

have almost consumed the postage. But the worst evil connected with these frequent distributions consists of the great delays which are occasioned, and have been the subject of just complaint.

The postmaster general says:

"Every distribution causes delay, and this must necessarily take place, under our present system, once or twice, which is one great cause of the complaint that letters do not reach their destination as soon as passengers. When the letter is from one distributing office to another the mailing is direct, and if sent on its proper course there is no good reason for any delay. The mailing, indeed, should be direct from every postoffice in the United States to another; but this, under our present system, I view as impracticable."

In 1857 and 1859 we find attempts to correct these abuses and make the scheme of distribution then in effect as efficient as possible. As late as 1857 the regulations say that "all letters and packets are to be distributed and remailed before the departure of the next mail, *if practicable!*"

In 1859 postmasters at way offices on railroads are instructed to have the mails ready when the cars arrive, since they are "supplied by the exchanging of pouches as the cars pass, without waiting for time to change the mails." In other words, railway methods were found from the first to be utterly incompatible with stage coach customs.

In the early part of the year of 1859 the subject of the distribution of letters was taken into full consideration, and the discontinuance of a number of distributing offices determined upon. This is an important stage in the development of the railway mail system. It began to be seen that the old methods were both slow and expensive. An order was issued on the 30th of April, 1859, discontinuing thirteen of the fifty offices which were at that time in existence.

The discontinuance of distributing offices was coincident with the establishment of railway postoffices. Instead of sending mail to be delayed from ten to twenty-four hours at points on the way, the practice of direct

mailing was substituted, and the abuses which had crept into the service through the distributing postoffices were in part corrected. The high commissions which were allowed formerly were cut off. The order of April 30, 1859, therefore, marks an epoch in the history of the postal service of the country in that it was an important economical measure, not only removing a heavy burden from the revenues of the department, but greatly accelerating the mails, preparing the way for the improvements introduced by the changed conditions of transportation. From that day to the present time the most radical reforms have taken place, and the most improved methods in handling the mails have been devised, no means being untried whereby the receiving, distribution, and discharging of the mails might be accelerated. Without doubt the distributing postoffices were a necessary element in the postal system of the country at a certain stage of our history. When the population was spreading into new districts, making it impossible to follow the names of the new offices, it was convenient to make certain well-known offices the central depots for all mails intended for a large district of country. No great injury to the service resulted, in days when all the machinery of the postoffice department moved slowly, in delaying a mail twenty-four hours that it might be assorted and remailed to other distributing offices more or less distant, or to its destination, as the case might be.

But the same industry which gave rise to the distributing postoffices in days when the mails were carried in stage coaches, sulkies, on horseback, or even by ruder methods, demanded the discontinuance of these central offices when new methods of locomotion came into general use. Instead of being a help the distributing postoffice became a hindrance, and in proportion as railways became carriers of the mails it was impossible for the old process of distribution to be maintained. There was an absurdity on the face of it in using such a dilatory and primitive method as the distributing offices, after having transported the mails at high speed. This was but illustrating in postal matters the folly of the hare in the fable, which running rapidly for some distance, slept leisurely by the

way, to awake after a time and find itself outstripped by the tortoise.

The correspondence of the country, freighted with commercial, social, and political intelligence, carried by rapidly moving trains, must be relieved from the frequent and unwarrantable delays caused by these distributing offices.

The complaints of the public and the urgent recommendations of men who thought they had discovered a better way, led the postmaster general in his report for 1859 to say:

"The expense attending the distribution of letters, even when honestly performed, and the legitimate and proper commission only charged, abstracts no inconsiderable sum from the postal revenues, and this is much swollen by the second and third process of the kind to which they are exposed, often by necessity, sometimes by accident and ignorance, and more frequently, it is feared, by design.

"But, as already intimated, this is not the only, or by any means the most serious evil which is sought to be remedied. The primary object of the whole mail system is to insure *speed* (with certainty and safety) in the transit of correspondence; and to effect this great end no unnecessary obstacle should be permitted to exist. Whether it is possible to dispense with the distributing system altogether is a problem yet to be solved; it exists in no other country, and would be unnecessary in this but for our great extent of territory and immense number of offices. It is evident that the list of offices of distribution should be reduced as much as possible from year to year, and that they should be established or continued only in populous cities and towns, where travel concentrates, and where mails and passengers have a temporary rest."

General Superintendent Vail, in a letter to Hon. Hannibal Hamlin, July 27, 1876, explaining the reasons for the discontinuance of the fast mail, said:

"So far as distribution is concerned, that must be made at some place, and it is economy to do it on the cars. If done at a postoffice it must be made in a limited time, as the mails are mostly deposited at the latest possible mo-

ment before closing time or the departure of the trains. To distribute these mails in the postoffice, force enough must be on hand to do this as quickly as possible. If this work is performed on the cars the clerks have all the time the mails are in transit to do it, and can thus distribute the work over their whole working hours. This work of distribution, if done at postoffices, is going on in a great number of them, while one railway postoffice car passes along and makes the distribution for all offices."

From all that has been given concerning this distributing postoffice system it will be seen that it was a stage-coach method carried over and continued in railroad days, and that it was certain to be discontinued with the general introduction of railways. The regulations doing away with commissions, making fixed salaries instead, making the prepayment of postage compulsory, abolishing the old post-bills, clumsy circulars, elaborate and unnecessary book entries, transcripts, and settlements which were always unsettled, were all steps by which the department passed from the old to the new. Under the old system there would not now be clerks enough to inspect and audit the accounts, nor room enough in the department to hold the returns for a single year. The new method is self-recording, self-checking, doing away with even a report of moneys collected on partly-paid letters, by means of the "postage-due" stamp. The Railway Mail Service has therefore done more than simply convey the mails rapidly. It has infused its quickened life into every other branch of the postal service. Where once there was opportunity for, and often a premium upon, fraud (as in the distributing postoffice system), now such rapidity in transmission and celerity in handling the mails is every where to be found as in the very nature of the case prevent both delay and depredation.

CHAPTER XI.

HONOR TO WHOM HONOR IS DUE.

In the light of all that the Railway Mail Service has grown to be in recent years it becomes an interesting question as to where the credit belongs for originating this service. Several claimants for the honor have arisen. We may say in general that from reports made to the postoffice department, antecedent to 1860, by Mr. Plitt and Mr. Hobbie, the whole matter of traveling postoffices was no new thing in 1864 when Mr. Armstrong made his first suggestions, nor even in 1862 when Mr. William A. Davis was distributing the overland mail in transit.

There seems to be no doubt that Mr. Davis was the first to distribute through mails in the United States, and the first to have cars prepared for that purpose, as was done by the Hannibal and Saint Joseph Railroad for the transportation of the overland mails. These mails accumulated in Saint Joseph, where they were distributed in the postoffice of that city; were often late by reason of the bad condition of the railroad, missing the regular connection with the stages departing from Saint Joseph West.

The facts in the case after a full review of all the evidence seem to be about as follows: The overland mails began to be carried over the Hannibal and Saint Joseph Railroad via Saint Joseph, Mo., July, 1861. On the 23rd of May, 1862, the postmaster at Saint Joseph, Mo., J. L. Bittinger, communicated his views to the postmaster general, as to some improved methods of dealing with the overland mails. This letter cannot be found, but the answer to it is among the files of the second assistant postmaster general, thanking Mr. Bittinger for the suggestions he has made. This answer is dated Washington, May 31, 1862, and from it we may infer that the letter from Mr. Bittinger included the suggestions of William

A. Davis, as to a more expeditious method of distributing and dispatching the overland mails. Mr. Davis is no longer living, but Mr. Bittinger, the postmaster who wrote the letter, is living, and in later correspondence with the department disavows all claim to originality for these suggestions, giving the full credit for any value they may have had to Mr. Davis, then assistant postmaster at Saint Joseph.

In a letter dated Saint Joseph, Mo., August 5, 1862, also on file in the department, Mr. Davis writes to Mr. McLellan, second assistant postmaster general, saying that he has succeeded in getting cars temporarily prepared, in which the work can be done until the new cars are ready. He says further, that the distribution was commenced on the Monday previous, and that after a week's experiment he can confidently report that when the accommodations are furnished that are promised by the superintendent of the road, the distribution can be done entirely to the satisfaction of the department.

From all the correspondence in the case it seems to be certain that the first practical experiment in this country, of which there is any record in the department, was made in 1862, under the superintendence of Mr. Davis, and the truth of history requires that these facts be set forth, since the Railway Mail Service has grown to such proportions as to become one of the most important branches of the postal system.

A thorough search of the records reveals nothing bearing upon the distribution of through mails earlier than the letter of the postmaster at Saint Joseph, which presumably contained the suggestions of Mr. Davis, and led to the experiment in connection with overland mails.

As showing that there was a disposition on the part of the special agents and other officers of the department to defer to Mr. Davis, as the original mover in the matter of distribution, we find that special agent Waller, to whom the whole matter in connection with the overland mails was referred by the postmaster general, writes to the postmaster, at Saint Joseph, for information in regard to some of the details of the work, saying in his letter: "Please see Mr. Davis and ask his opinion with regard to

some of the details of the work, saying in his letter: "Please see Mr. Davis and ask his opinion in regard to this." And again under date of February 23, 1864, special agent Waller writes to Mr. Davis himself, saying that the Atlantic and Great Western Railway connecting with the New York and Erie at Salamanca is completed as far as Akron, Ohio, and they think they can carry the western mail from New York to Saint Louis quicker than any other road, adding:

"They are now preparing to build their mail cars, and as the postmaster general feels disposed to extend, as far as practicable, the system of distribution inaugurated upon the Hannibal and Saint Joseph Railroad by you, it is desirable that the cars to be constructed for the road above named should be properly arranged for distribution. And as the first experiment in constructing such cars was made upon your road, we are desirous of having the drawing and description of the car you now use, with any suggestions for improvement that may strike you as advisable."

At this date Mr. Davis had been advanced to the grade of special agent at Saint Joseph, the same grade in the department occupied by the men who, later in the same year, became more conspicuously identified with the inauguration of the railway postoffice.

It has not been deemed necessary to notice the claim that has been put forth in one quarter that the railway mail system originated in February, 1862, within the lines of the Army of the Tennessee.

No such claim would be made by any one who fully understood just what the Railway Mail Service is, and what relation it bears to the distribution service that preceded it. For years previous to 1860 there had been some distribution of mail on railways. But the handling of through mail on the cars without turning it into distributing offices began, as has been shown, in a small way with respect to the overland mails only, under the superintendence of William A. Davis, in July, 1862. It was urged upon the department and elaborated into a more general scheme by Mr. Armstrong in 1864; it was conducted as at first a doubtful, and afterwards a successful,

experiment under the double superintendence of Mr. Armstrong and Mr. Park from 1865 to 1896. It widened into greater usefulness under Mr. Armstrong from 1869 to 1871; it made many new and valuable improvements under Mr. Bangs from 1871 to 1876; it was further enlarged under Mr. Vail from 1876 to 1878, and had its most phenomenal development, its true organization, its new nomenclature, its fast mails and various other features which have served to popularize it under the longer administration of Mr. Thompson, the late general superintendent, from 1878 to 1885.

Owing to the controversy which has arisen over the question of to whom the credit belongs for the present system of traveling postoffices, which the postoffice department has done its best to settle, we give below a few letters from those intimately acquainted with the facts, which tend to establish the claim of Mr. William A. Davis, assistant postmaster at Saint Joseph, Mo., in the early sixties. The following letter shows the origin of the railway mail service.

THE BIRTH OF A GIANT.

Postoffice, Saint Joseph, Mo., August 5, 1862.

SIR: I have the honor to report that in obedience to verbal orders received through Mr. Waller, special agent of the department, one of the clerks and myself left here on Saturday, 26th, so as to be in Quincy on Monday 28th ultimo, to commence the distribution of the overland mail on the Hannibal and Saint Joseph Railroad. Finding that the mail cars had not been arranged according to promise made to Mr. Waller, instead of going to Quincy I proceeded to Hannibal and succeeded in getting cars temporarily fixed in which (though with some inconvenience) I think the work can be done until the new cars are ready. The distribution was commenced on Monday at Palmyra, and I assisted the clerk going up as far as Clarence, at which place I turned back with the clerk who had come down to go up on Tuesday; assisted up to the same point on Tuesday; turned back and distributed the mail going up on Wednesday myself. We have now got

through with a week's service, and can confidently report that when the accommodations are finished that are promised by Mr. Hayward, superintendent of the road, the distribution can be done entirely to your satisfaction.

The excuse given by the officer at Hannibal for not having the cars ready, was that they had been daily expecting both Mr. Hayward and Mr. Nettleton, neither of whom had arrived when I got there on Saturday. Mr. Hayward got home on Wednesday last and I saw him on Friday; he promised to have three cars got up, specially for the mail service, and have them run through to West Quincy; this will be all that is necessary to secure the entire success of the distribution on the road, promising that we have competent men to do the work.

Most respectfully, your obedient servant,

WILLIAM A. DAVIS.

HON. G. W. McLELLAN,

Assistant Postmaster General.

Omaha, Nebr., May 27, 1884.

DEAR SIR: I have your favor of the 10th instant concerning claim of heirs of the late William A. Davis that he originated the idea of the late railway mail service, and will say in reply that the claim is unquestionably a just one.

At the time of the establishment of the overland mail service the coaches left Saint Joseph, Mo., in the morning, about three hours after the arrival of the mail train over the Hannibal and Saint Joseph Railroad, Saint Joseph being the distributing postoffice at which the overland mail was made up. The time between the arrival of the mail from the East and the departure of the coaches for the West was found too short, and Mr. Davis, who was at that time chief clerk of the mailing department in the Saint Joseph office, suggested sending clerks from our office to Quincy, Ill., to meet the mail and with authority to open the brass-lock sacks and the Saint Joseph delivery postoffice packages, taking therefrom all California letters or letters going by overland stage route. These letters were made up precisely as they would have been at our office and the records were a part of the records of the

office. The superintendent of the Hannibal and Saint Joseph Railroad had a car prepared under Mr. Davis's directions, and Mr. Davis, Mr. Thomas Clark, superintendent of mails at New York postoffice and myself went to Quincy with two clerks from the Saint Joseph office, and rode from Palmyra, Mo., to Saint Joseph Mo., in the first railway postal car that was ever built, so far as I know. The service was so efficient and showed such advantages over the old method of distributing mails that it was at once adopted by the department, and the service became general.

I have stated, as nearly as I can remember, the circumstances connected with this matter as affecting Mr. Davis, but it would be unjust to cease without saying that the success of the experiment was made easy by the quick perception of its advantages and the prompt and energetic action of Hon. J. L. Bittinger, who was postmaster at Saint Joseph at the time, and to whom all credit is due for whatever action I took in establishing the service, as his representative. I sincerely hope you will be successful in your efforts to secure proper recognition of Mr. Davis' claims.

Yours, very truly,

GUY C. BARTON.

VINTON PIKE, ESQ.,
Saint Joseph, Mo.

Kansas City, Mo., June 25, 1884.

DEAR SIR: I have read the letter of Hon. Guy C. Barton, who was chief clerk in the Saint Joseph postoffice during the greater portion of my term from May, 1861, to May, 1865.

I am satisfied that Mr. Barton sets forth the facts concerning the inauguration of the railway mail service. I am as well satisfied that Mr. W. A. Davis, who was my predecessor in the office, was the originator of it as I am that I am living. Mr. Davis had been in the service of the department for, I think, over forty years. He knew every detail of the service, and had handled the overland mail from the start. The exigencies of the war rendered the operating of the Hannibal and Saint Joseph Railroad

exceedingly difficult, and almost every train would be behind time. As the overland coaches were expected to leave on their journey across the plains promptly, of necessity they frequently had to go without a great portion of the Eastern mail.

Mr. Davis conceived the idea of distributing the mail on the cars, and laid the plans before me. I was satisfied they were good, and urged him to go ahead and request authority from the department to experiment. He was soon granted the necessary authority, and with clerks detailed from the Saint Joseph office under his personal supervision, the railway mail service between Quincy and Saint Joseph was soon in successful operation. The department at once perceived the great advantages of the system, adopted it, and rapidly put it into operation over the whole country.

How credit ever came to be given to any other person than Mr. Davis for originating this service I never could conceive. I suggest that possibly his correspondence on the subject with the department may yet be preserved at Washington, which would settle the matter definitely.

If Hon. Mr. Zevely, then third assistant Postmaster General, is yet living, he could settle it at once.

I sincerely hope you may succeed in securing the recognition from the department you desire, and that credit for originating the railway mail service may at last be given to Mr. Davis, to whom it rightfully belongs.

Very truly, yours,

J. L. BITTINGER.

W. H. GORDON, Esq.,
Saint Joseph, Mo.

Washington, D. C., August 9, 1884.

At the suggestion of the Second Assistant Postmaster-General I have read the statement prepared by Mr. Johnson relating to the history of the United States railway postoffice. Many of the facts given agree with my own knowledge and recollection, and I think the whole statement is substantially correct. In one particular only would I make a change; that is for the purpose of crediting W. A. Davis, of Saint Joseph, Mo., with first sug-

gesting to the Postoffice department the distribution of the California overland mails on the Hannibal and Saint Joseph railroad. This fact seems to be established by Mr. Bittinger's testimony—then postmaster at Saint Joseph—whose letter on the subject is in the Post Office Department.

A. N. ZEVELY,
Late Third Assistant Postmaster General.

It is due to the clear foresight of Mr. Zevely that the plans of Mr. Davis and other subordinates were permitted to bear fruit. During the remainder of his term he rendered great service by his able and energetic efforts to put the new system in operation throughout the country. It is doubtful if many men, either in war or peace, have contributed more to the material advancement of their country than the little group, whose names are almost forgotten, who brought about this great reform. It is not to the year 1834, with the beginning of railroads, that we look for the origin of modern mail facilities, but to the time thirty years later with the introduction of the railway postoffice, a great civic triumph in the midst of a great civil war.

CHAPTER XII.

THE RAILWAY MAIL SERVICE AFTER 1860.

The beginning of the system of distributing mail in cars while en route was the turning point in the history of the postoffice itself. The service had fallen into public contempt; passenger traffic was far swifter than the mails; the revenues had so fallen in comparison to the expenditures that in the year 1860 the deficit was eighty-seven per cent of the receipts. That is, the expenses of the postoffice service were almost double its income. This was the state of affairs which the railway postoffice found when it came to the rescue of this most useful and popular branch of the government. Its history from this time until the present is simply a story of its triumph, and its most amazing feature is the figures. In 1860 the receipts of the entire postal service of the United States was only a little over \$8,000,000; in the year ending June, 30, 1902, the receipts was \$121,000,000, the increase for the year being \$2,000,000 greater than the whole revenue for 1860. The income from the postal business of a single city, New York, for the last year, exceeded \$10,000,000. But whatever we say boastingly of such a great and growing service is destined to become a jest to those who come after us. Our achievements are only great when looking backward, and must some day look insignificant when the vast growth and expansion now surely impending has been accomplished. For example, a document published in 1884 by the postoffice department, proudly compares the business of the department that year with that of the year 1880, as follows:

"During the year ending June 30, 1880, the whole number of pieces of mail handled was 2,658,483,220; for the year ending June 30, 1884, the whole number of pieces handled was 4,519,661,900."

This undoubtedly shows a gratifying increase, but even the latter figures are little more than half the amount for the year ending June 30, 1901, viz: 7,424,390,329, and probably not more than half the amount for 1902, the statement of which is not yet published.

The year 1866 opens with an aggregate railroad transportation of 24,000,000 miles, at a cost of 11¼ cents per mile. The number of route agents and baggage-masters in the service was 497, the number of postal railroad clerks sixty-four.

The railway postoffice system is in its infancy, and arrangements are in progress for its more general introduction. The postmaster general expresses the hope in his annual report that the system of accelerating the transmission of correspondence and lessening the number of distributing offices will be a permanent advantage to the postal interests of the country.

It would seem that as the first experiments of carrying the mail on the railroad were such as to call forth intimations that the mails would be withdrawn and put back upon the stages, so the first experiments in through distribution were not such as to commend them to universal favor. Even some of those concerned in the work seemed to doubt its utility. The third assistant postmaster general, who had especial charge of this experiment, had to make an elaborate argument to convince some of the men engaged in inaugurating it that it was of general utility and feasible.

It is in this year that the postmaster general, in his annual report, grows eloquent over the benefits of railway mail transportation, claiming that the change in modes of conveyances from carrier pigeons and special messengers and post riders, with billets and small packages and a few letters, to railroads and steamboats, carrying every day hundreds of tons of letters and newspapers and books all through the length and breadth of the land, is an extraordinary commentary upon the increasing wealth and prosperity of the Union and the energy and intelligence of the people.

In 1871 an important improvement was introduced by General Superintendent Bangs in the separation of mails

by States. This improvement consisted in dispatching the mail for each State to the most distant railway postoffice that could dispose of it. Capt. M. J. McGrath, assistant superintendent of Railway Mail Service and now superintendent of mails in Chicago, was assigned to this work, and in 1872 the general superintendent instructed Mr. McGrath to proceed to New York and devise some plan to relieve the New York postoffice from a great accumulation of paper mails on certain days of each week. By means of interviews and explanations the New York publishers were induced to co-operate with the department in the introduction of this new method of separation by States. The wisdom of the new plan was soon demonstrated, and the block in the mails in the New York City office was completely broken up. At present one-half of the newspaper mail received at the New York office for distribution passes through it intact to the railway postoffice cars.

Among the curiosities of the early correspondence might be cited the following: Mr. Park, superintendent of the railway mail service, addresses a letter to the superintendent of the Erie Railroad dated "Inspection division, November 5, 1867," inclosing a complaint from the head clerks on the day line of postal cars, as follows:

"We have a complaint to make in regard to the way the express companies load the express end of the car. They load them so heavy that being all on one end and the mail end light, the cars are positively unsafe to ride in, and one of the conductors told a railway postal clerk a few days since that he would not ride in a car loaded as that one was (the one in the train) for \$50 per mile."

It will be borne in mind that what is known distinctively as the railway postoffice system began with the distribution of through mails, connecting various lines that were hitherto disjointed, and authorizing a new class of clerks to perform a new class of duties. Hitherto route agents had only opened the iron lock bags containing local mail for way distribution. The brass lock mails, or through mails, were never distributed until authority was given, in 1862, for distribution of the overland mail on the Hannibal and Saint Joseph Railroad.

Some little controversy at one time existed as to the justice of the present methods of obtaining the average daily weight to be taken as a basis for determining the annual pay, but a little examination made it clear that no other way of proceeding could be so just as that now in vogue.

The present rule is, on those roads carrying the mails six times a week, to weigh the mails in thirty consecutive days on which the mails are carried, which would cover a period of thirty-five days; dividing the aggregate thirty weighings by thirty will give the daily average. On those roads carrying the mails seven times per week the weighing is done for thirty-five consecutive days (including Sundays) and the aggregate divided by thirty for a basis of pay.

It is evident that the period during which the weighing is continued covers, in both cases, all the mails carried for thirty-five days. If, in the second case, we should take our basis from an average obtained by dividing the aggregate weight by thirty-five we should commit the absurdity of putting a premium upon inefficiency, for evidently if the Sunday train were cut off we should virtually have the same mails less frequently carried, and therefore with a higher daily average, and therefore a higher pay basis than in the case where the seventh train was run and the greater accommodation rendered.

The present method gives no additional pay for the additional seventh train, but the other method would cause a reduction on account of better service, and practically would operate as a fine on all those roads carrying the mails daily, including Sunday.

THE RAILWAY MAIL AND CIVIL SERVICE.

Up to this time the organization of Railway Mail Service was a matter of departmental regulation; but by an act of Congress of June 17, 1878, one agent was authorized to superintend postal railway service, and nine assistant superintendents of Railway Mail Service were authorized, who might be detailed to act as superintendents of divisions; and in an act of Congress in the following

year, this agent, before authorized to superintend the service, is designated as the "Superintendent of Railway Mail Service."

This may be taken as the end of the experimental period in the history of this service, and we enter now on a period of development.

The complete reorganization of the railway mail service was effected by the passage of an act at the first session of the forty-seventh Congress. The postmaster general had recommended such reorganization, and it had been strenuously urged in each annual report of the general superintendent for several successive years. Under this act of Congress, which was approved July 31, 1882, an order was issued by the postmaster general to carry the same into effect.

All former designations of employees of the railway mail service were declared obsolete, and but one term was thereafter to be used, viz, "railway postal clerk."

For the sake of further uniformity in the nomenclature of the service, all lines were to be called "railway postoffices." The postal clerks were subdivided into five classes, with salaries proportionally allotted up to \$1,400, the clerk of the highest class in any crew to be designated the "clerk in charge."

At the close of the fiscal year ending June 30, 1873, there were 752 railway postoffice clerks in the service, who were classified as follows; 283 head clerks, 379 clerks, and 90 assistant clerks. During the year 1873-'74 there were added to the service 98 clerks, making the entire force to consist of 850 clerks at the time of the reorganization.

As early in the history of the railway mail service as 1868 the principle was clearly announced that positions in the service were entirely apart from political appointments, and the idea of a sudden change in the whole service, or an individual removal, for political reasons, was as foreign to the service as it must be destructive to its efficiency. One of the best sentences to be found in these earliest letter-books is in the announcement of this principle by Mr. Parks, in the following language:

"The postal clerks have come to be looked upon in a very different light than mere political appointments, and so long as they perform their duty faithfully to the public and abstain from making themselves obnoxious politically their positions will be secured to them."

April 7, 1881, that the order of the postmaster general was issued to take effect on the 1st of May, following, completely reorganizing the railway mail service. The effect of the reorganization was most salutary, though the first result of it seemed harsh to those clerks whose salaries were reduced or whose retirement became necessary.

The proposition that reward should follow merit was clearly established in the service, and that it was faithfully carried out is shown by the fact that to-day every prominent official connected with the service is a man who has risen from the ranks and, with one exception, I think, has run for a longer or shorter period as a clerk in a postal car performing actual distribution. The principle embodied in the civil service law was in effect in the railway mail service before the adoption of that law, and for years prior to its being placed under the law in May, 1889, a system of examinations had been established and a probationary term, during which the clerk must demonstrate his fitness for the service, had been in vogue. Promotions were also based upon the efficiency records of the clerks, and appointments were distributed among the various congressional districts in proportion to the mileage of the various lines in those districts. This did away in a great measure with the political pressure for appointments, as it was recognized that the distribution of places under the system adopted was fair and impartial to all. The placing of the service under the law wrought but little change, therefore, beyond the establishment of an eligible register in each State from which selections for appointment could be made independent of congressional districts and political influences. The scope of the examinations for admission to the eligible register was outlined so as to meet the necessities of the service and prominence given to those features most essential in the actual work to be performed.

The general superintendent of the railway mail service,

in his annual report for 1901, has the following to say :

"The advantages which have accrued to the railway mail service by its having been included within the civil service classification have been the more apparent as time has passed. Considerably more than seventy per cent of those now upon the rolls have obtained their appointments through examination and certification by the civil service commission, and the general excellence of the personnel of the service amply verifies the value of the present system and the tests applied. This has been especially noticeable since the commission, upon the recommendation of this office, has rejected the applications of all those having physical defects which are held to be of a character that would impair the usefulness of such persons after selection.

The only suggestions which this office has at this time to make in the direction of improvement are two, which have commended themselves after a long experience and observation, namely, that the minimum weight for applicants be advanced from 125 pounds to 135 pounds, and the minimum height from 5 feet 4 inches to 5 feet 6 inches. It is thought that these further restrictions upon applicants would not materially reduce the number of eligibles, and on the other hand would work a betterment in the physical qualifications and adaptability of the clerks secured."

The following year he writes :

"The operation of the civil service rules governing appointments in the service and promotions continues to be satisfactory. The effect of the additional requirement as to height and weight in the physical examination of applicants has not as yet become apparent, for the reason that all certificates up to the present time have been made from the eligibles examined under the old rule, but undoubtedly the increase in the requirement in height from 5 feet 4 inches to 5 feet 6 inches and as to weight from 125 to 135 pounds, will give us a class of men much better fitted for the arduous duties of a postal clerk. Experience has shown that men 5 feet 4 inches in height are not tall enough to reach the top boxes in the letter cases in our standard cars, and one whose weight is barely over

125 pounds is not heavy and strong enough to do the heavy lifting sometimes required without becoming too fatigued to continue at work on a long and tiresome run."

NUMBER OF LINES AND CLERKS.

There were in operation on the 30th of June, 1902, 146 full railway postoffice lines, manned by 1,911 crews, aggregating 5,682 clerks (including 41 acting clerks); 1,132 apartment railway postoffice lines, manned by 2,835 crews, aggregating 3,138 clerks (including 37 acting clerks); 23 electric car lines, with 30 crews and 31 clerks (including 2 acting clerks); 49 steamboat lines, with 82 crews and 82 clerks (including 24 acting clerks); making a total of 1,350 lines of all kinds, manned by 8,933 clerks, which only covers the working force of the lines. In addition, there were 47 officials, 95 chief clerks, 394 transfer clerks employed in handling the mails at important junction points, and 262 clerks detailed to clerical duty in the various offices of the service, making a grand total of 9,731 employees in the service, an increase during the year of 549 employees.

The miles of railroad covered by full railway postoffice lines was 49,587.69; by apartment railway postoffice lines, 115,577.83; by electric and cable car lines, 330.50; the miles covered by steamboat lines was 13,300.91, making a total mileage of 178,796.93 covered by railway postoffice service.

Appointments are usually made at \$800 per annum. During the year ending June 30, 1902, the salaries of clerks of classes four and five, which for many years were held by restricted appropriations at amounts less than the maximum allowed by law, have been restored; a higher class (\$1,600 per annum) has been created for chief clerks, and allowances have been made for the traveling expenses of this class of employees;; a still higher class (\$1,800 per annum) has been established for assistant division superintendents, with provision for traveling expenses; the salaries of division superintendents have been increased; fifteen days' annual leave has been granted to clerks performing daily service; the postmaster general has been authorized to pay \$1,000 to the families of

clerks killed in the line of duty, and, last and most important, as affecting the clerks who work in the cars, provision has been made for the promotion of clerks on the heavier apartment car lines from \$1,000 to \$1,100 and \$1,200 per annum, and for the promotion of assistant chief clerks and a number of clerks on full railway post-office lines operating more than one car to a train from \$1,200 to \$1,300 per annum.

The following bill for the protection of railway mail clerks while on duty is now pending in Congress, and has the approval of the department:

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That every person who, by violence, enters a railway postoffice car or apartment assigned to the use of the railway mail service, or who willfully and maliciously assaults a railway postal clerk while in the discharge of his duties as such, and every person who willfully aids or assists therein, shall, for every such offense, be punishable by a fine of not less than one hundred dollars and not more than one thousand dollars, or by imprisonment for not less than one year and not more than three years.

Casualties in the Railway Mail Service.

Year ended June 30—	Total Clerks.	Acci- dents.	Clerks killed.	Clerks seri- ously injured	Clerks ^a slight- ly in- jured.
1892.....	6,417	345	5	60	112
1893.....	6,645	403	10	66	115
1894.....	6,856	362	4	48	99
1895.....	7,045	497	7	50	128
1896.....	7,408	495	5	47	65
1897.....	7 573	589	14	33	75
1898.....	7,999	597	7	34	146
1899.....	8,388	799	6	50	162
1900.....	8,695	697	4	57	187
1901.....	8,978	825	7	63	229
1902.....	9,485	^a 296	9	88	302

^aThe number of accidents shown opposite 1902 are those in which clerks were killed or injured, or in which mail was lost or damaged. The accidents of other years represent those of every kind, mostly in which the car was damaged to some extent.

The department has arranged with many of the larger railroads to have a car between the mail car and the locomotive, which it is hoped will lessen the number of serious accidents, the mail car having in the past been usually next to the tender, thereby receiving the full shock of collision.

CONCLUSION.

The growth the railway mail service has made in efficiency can best be illustrated by comparing the records of the year ending June 30, 1877, with the records ending June 30, 1901. During the former year the force employed in the railway mail service numbered 2,500, and these distributed 864,732,927 pieces of mail matter, making one error to every 3,264 pieces distributed correctly. In the latter year the force employed numbered 8,979, and these distributed 14,181,224,420 pieces of mail matter, making one error to every 10,626 pieces distributed. This shows a per cent increase in mail matter distributed of 1,539.95; per cent. of increase in efficiency, 222.48; per cent of increase in force, 259.12. This great growth is due to the increase in our population and in the development of the country in every direction, and the increase in efficiency is the result of training and discipline, experience, wise selection of employees under the civil service regulations, and retention in the service of those who have proved themselves to be efficient.

PART III.

DAILY LIFE OF A
RAILWAY MAIL CLERK.

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THE DAILY LIFE OF A RAILWAY MAIL CLERK.

CHAPTER XIII.

GETTING THERE.

One day when reading the paper I noticed an advertisement saying that the United States Civil Service Commission was to hold competitive examinations to secure clerks for the government service. Being desirous of bettering my condition in life, I immediately wrote the commission for their manual. In a short time I received the manual, and after looking it over decided to try the Railway Mail Service examination, and after examining into the requirements more closely I began to wonder if I would be able to pass the examination. It had been some years since I left school, and of course was "rusty" on nearly all the subjects in which I would be examined. Then the only thing I could do was to find some way I could "brush up" on these subjects. I decided to take instruction from the Columbian Correspondence College, of Washington, D. C., and made arrangements with it to take its course. I studied during my leisure time, and made application to the Civil Service Commission to be admitted to the next examination. In about three months from the time I commenced studying, I took the examination, and in about six months afterward was notified that I had successfully passed.

Some time after I received notice I had been appointed as a substitute railway postal clerk, and that if my record was such at the end of six months' service, as to entitle me to an appointment as a permanent clerk, I would receive such an appointment. I was directed to report to the chief clerk at a nearby city to take the oath of office

and receive instructions, which I lost no time in doing. Reporting to him I was required to sign and take the oath of office, and take what is called the "first reading test," which is to read the addresses on 100 cards as rapidly and accurately as possible. I was then informed I should report to the Barberton and Salone railway postoffice car, (all mail cars in charge of mail clerks are known as railway mail postoffices, and are named from the cities at their termini; this car run between Barberton and Salone), which went out on train No. 12, on the C. W. & X. railroad the next morning, at 6:45. I was then given a "permit" to present to the clerk in charge of the car, saying I had been assigned to that car for instructions, and should be permitted to ride between Barberton and Salone.

I was also told to provide myself with a pair of overalls and jacket, and that if I desired I could sleep in the dormitory by paying the janitor twenty-five cents per week. The dormitory is a large room, or rooms, provided by the government for the use of clerks at different places where many R. P. O. routes terminate, usually on the top floor of the postoffice. At about 10 p. m., I reported at the dormitory and was given a pretty good bed. I was up and down at the mail car, which I found after a great amount of inquiry and trouble, at about 6 a. m. I introduced myself to the clerks at work and presented my "permit" and was cordially greeted by all, and was told to get into my overalls and get to work. I then looked about me. I saw one end or more of the car covered with a cabinet of little boxes, which were all labeled, and which I rightly concluded were letter boxes; in front of this was a narrow table, on which were numerous bundles of letters, which a clerk was opening and putting the letters in these boxes. On each side of the car were iron racks with what seemed an innumerable number of sacks, and pouches hung in them. Up higher and over these, were a number of small boxes on each side of the car. A table extended down the center of the car covered with papers, which the clerks were throwing as fast as their hands could fly, into these sacks and

pouches. In the other end of the car were stalls made by posts extending from the top to the bottom of the car, and these were nearly filled with sacks full of mail.

I put on my overalls and jacket and was told to walk over to the paper table and "face up" the mail. By this is meant to so arrange the pieces that the addresses will be right side up and exposed to the view of the clerk working the mail, and save him the trouble of turning the piece over and hunting up the address. I did this as fast as I could but was unable to "face up" as fast as one man threw it in the sacks. When the mail was nearly off the table I was told to dump the contents of one of the sacks in the stalls, upon the table. I walked back after the sack and after attempting to lift the sack several times and failing, one of the clerks assisted me, and together we threw the sack on the table. I tried to open it, but found I could not start the clasp on the strings to the sack. The sacks are shirred up by a string passing around the top of the sack, and the ends of the string pass through a clasp, which shoves down over the strings to the sack, as the top of the sack is shirred up and holds the ends of the string from pulling through the clasp. I could not manipulate this clasp to open the sack, and after many efforts one of the clerks explained how it was done, and even after this it was some time before I could open a sack quickly. While I was endeavoring to open this sack the other clerks had been dumping sacks and working the mail.

They all seemed to be working to see how fast they could throw the mail in the sacks and pouches. Everything was hurry, hustle and bustle; I became nervous and did not seem to be able to do anything. However, I continued to dump and face up mail as fast as I could until it was nearly all distributed in the sacks that hung in the iron racks. When the mail was nearly all distributed one of the clerks handed me a piece of mail, and told me to deposit it in the sack hanging in the rack labeled the same town to which the piece was addressed. I began hunting for this sack, and then discovered that each pouch and sack had a slip or label holder attached

to it, in which was inserted a folded slip with the name of the place or the railway postoffice it was to be delivered to printed or written upon it. These slips are pieces of paper a little larger than 3 in. by 5 in., on which is printed or written the name of the postoffice to which the sack or pouch is to be delivered, and the name of the postoffice (or railway postoffice), making up the sack or pouch. This slip must be stamped with name of the clerk making up the sack, the name of the railway postoffice, and the number of the train. The slip is then folded to fit the slip-holder on the sack and inserted in the holder so that the name of the postoffice to which it is to be delivered is exposed to view. The slips used on packages of letters are the same, except that they are not folded, and are tied on the top of a package of letters and deposited in a pouch labeled as above. These are called "faceing slips."

These slips have to be prepared by the clerk before entering on his tour of duty, as there is no time during his time on duty. After a time I found the sack for the piece I had and deposited it in the sack. All the time the clerk at the letter case had been cutting bundles of letters and sticking the letters in the boxes in the case as fast as his hands could travel from the letters to the boxes. Some of the sacks in the racks were full, and it was necessary to take these out and pile them back in the stalls and hang empty sacks in the racks in their places. At this time I was instructed how to hang sacks in the rack in such a manner as to hang smoothly and with the end open. It requires considerable practice to do this. This was just completed when three large wagon loads of mail drove up to the car door. Then it was necessary to take this in the car and pile it in the proper stalls. It was nearly time for the train to leave and it was hurry and bustle to get this mail in the car by the time the train started.

Some of the sacks of mail were too heavy for one man to lift, and by the time we had the mail all in the car I was nearly exhausted. The train started and the clerks began to unlock the pouches and distribute the mail

we had just taken in. I could only look on; my mind was in a whirl, my back and arms ached, and I began to wonder if this was the kid-gloved position I had imagined that of a railway postoffice clerk. It seemed the train had but just started when the whistle blew and we were going into the town of Upperdyke. The letter clerk tied up a bundle of letters he took out of the case and threw it in the Upperdyke pouch, another clerk took the pouch out of the rack and locked it just as we stopped at the station. He threw off the pouch and another was thrown on, which was immediately unlocked and the mail distributed. At another whistle the clerk takes the pouch out of the rack, locks it and steps to the car door as this is a "catch station," i. e., a place where the train does not stop but an exchange of mail is made. The clerk raised the arm of the catcher and throws the pouch, and then a bang, and he has caught the pouch which had been hung on the "mail catcher" at the station. This was unlocked; the mail distributed, and the clerks take out and lock the pouches for the next station. At the next station several pouches and sacks were put off and several taken on.

This continued until station after station were passed and all this time the clerks had been working as fast as it was possible for them to work. Sometimes the car would start with a sudden jerk and I would be thrown against its side, the table, rack or something else. After a long time the clerks began pulling the sacks and pouches out of the racks and hanging the empty ones in their places to use on the return trip. As we neared Salome, the end of our run or trip, all the letters were tied out of the case, and all the mail was deposited in the different pouches and sacks, and the pouches were locked. I was then told to wash up, as we would get something to eat before we made the return trip, and judging from the looks of the others, I needed scrubbing. Arriving at Salome we delivered all of our mail and extra empty pouches and sacks, and as it seemed to be the rule in everything, we hurried to dinner, hurried to eat, and hurried back to the car, and the mail began to come by the wagon load. Then it was hurry to get it into the

car and distribute it. As the sacks and pouches now hanging in the racks were not arranged in the same order as before I was entirely at sea, and could do nothing but dump and face up mail.

The same thing, hurry and bustle was the rule on the return trip. We reached Barberton at 9:10 p. m. The clerks told me I had better report at the car at 3 o'clock the next morning, and then they would have more time to instruct me. By the time I had eaten my supper and retired it was 10:30 p. m., and I instructed the janitor to call me at 2:30 a. m. At 3 a. m., the next morning I reported at the car. I was tired, sore and stiff. I found the clerks were already there and at work. I was allowed to try to distribute some of the paper mail, being first instructed that first-class mail should never be put in anything but pouches, but other mail could be put in either pouches or sacks. I endeavored to distribute some of the mail by picking up a piece and hunting up a sack to deposit it in. This continued the same as the day before, hurry and hustle all day long. I was given a "local scheme" to learn. A "local scheme" gives all the postoffices served by a railway postoffice and in their consecutive order, and their "dis." By "dis" is meant the postoffice not served by the railway postoffice direct, but are served by stages from postoffices which are served direct by the R. P. O. (railway postoffice). Near the end of the week I had learned the "local scheme," and the location of the different sacks and pouches as they hung in the racks, or as it is called, "the hanging of the car," so that with some thinking, I could distribute some mail. At the end of the week I was nearly tired out. On Saturday night the chief clerk told me the "helper" on this run had been granted a leave of absence for the next week, and I would be expected to take his place which I did, and with the help of the other clerks got along very well.

I found that in the mail that was delivered to us just before the train left Barberton, the mail for the first three or four stations was made up in pouches ready to deliver, and the paper mail for the next five or six stations was

made up and marked Barberton and Salone R. P. O. No. 1, and the mail for the remaining stations, Barberton and Salone, No. 2. It was necessary to distribute all the mail in the No. 1 sacks before we reached the first of the No. 1 stations, and the No. 2 sacks before we reached the first of the No. 2 stations. The pouches, which as stated before, contained the letters, were always opened and contents distributed first. The direct packages, i. e., a package bearing a slip reading Roetown, was deposited in the Roetown pouch, but packages bearing a slip reading Barberton and Salone R. P. O. No. 1, or Barberton and Salone R. P. O. No. 2, were thrown on the letter table to be cut and worked by the letter clerk, and the same rule as to No. 1 and 2 stations applies to them as to the paper mail.

We often found mail that was addressed to postoffices we had already passed, or which were in the opposite direction from which we were going. This I found was deposited in a pouch and was put off at a station to be given to the R. P. O. going in the opposite direction, the pouch being properly labeled to such R. P. O. This was called the "back mail." I ended this week as "helper," with a knowledge of the location of the sacks, pouches and boxes in the car, and a general idea of how the paper mail was distributed, but as yet had no idea of the distribution of letters, except as to "direct packages." I was ready to rest and regain the sleep I had lost, as four to four and one-half hours per night is hardly sufficient for one who is standing on his feet in a flying, swinging car, working with both hands and brain during the remaining of the twenty-four.

CHAPTER XIV.

STILL AT IT.

The next Monday morning the chief clerk sent for me and gave me the "second reading test," which is the same as the first, except with different cards. He also gave me what is termed the "black book," which is a book of instructions containing forty or fifty pages, which I was informed I was expected to commit to memory and be examined upon some future time. He also informed me one of the clerks on the Barberton and Pacific R. P. O. wanted a leave of absence for one week, commencing two weeks from that day, and if so desired I could go on there and learn the run and fill his place while absent. I concluded to do this, and accordingly was given a permit to ride on this R. P. O. for instructions. I had about the same experience on this car as I had on the Barberon and Salone R. P. O., except I learned the location of the sacks, etc., much quicker. On this R. P. O. there were only two clerks, who worked six days and rested eight, i. e., they commenced work on Monday morning and worked until Saturday night, then two other clerks worked the next six days, commencing Monday morning, alternating each week. I continued to learn the run for the two weeks, and consequently was pretty well prepared to take the clerks' place. On Saturday before going to work I procured the slips I was to use in the sacks and pouches the next week, I also bought a stamp, to stamp my name, R. P. O. and number of the train, on the slips, and after stamping folded them. Each day's slips, and each direction had to be put in separate bunches, so that I had twelve bunches of slips. This alone occupied about a half a day. I went through the following week pretty well with the aid of the other clerk. When I drew my pay for this week I was only paid for the days I actually worked at the rate of \$800 per annum, while the clerk I worked for drew

the difference between \$800 and \$1,000 per annum, (the salary he received,) and also full pay for the following eight days which he did not work. This did not seem fair to me, and does not now. I continued to learn runs and working for other clerks until I had worked six months.

In the meantime I had been examined on the book of instructions. I had been provided with the General Scheme of the State, which is a book containing the names of all the postoffices in the state, arranged alphabetically by counties, and the name of the R. P. O. that serves the same with mail. A clerk must learn this, and be examined on it. This is called a "case examination," from the fact that it is the examination provided with a case of small boxes, which are labeled like the different railway postoffices, and small cards with the name of the postoffice written thereon, and the clerk is to put each card in the box labeled the R. P. O. that serves the postoffice written thereon. When the postoffice is a junction point, i. e., where more than one R. P. O. enters a town, you are required to place the card having the name of this postoffice thereon in a box labeled "Junction" and a postoffice having a large "dis," i. e., where many postoffices are served by stage from a P. O. and not directly from an R. P. O., the postoffices served by stage are placed in a box marked the postoffice from which they are served "dis." Thus, "Barberton dis." The scheme is divided into sections comprising a certain number of counties, and are called sections A B C and D, each section usually contains about 1,000 postoffices. Some state scheme having comparatively few postoffices are not divided into sections.

A clerk is only required to be examined in one section at a time as a usual thing. The first time you are examined on a section a clerk has only to have 85 per cent. correct, after that he has to make 98 per cent. I had, during this six months, been examined on two sections, which is necessary before a "substitute" is entitled to a permanent appointment. I was, therefore, entitled to a permanent appointment when a vacancy occurred. In a short time I received a notice that I had been appointed a Railway

Postal Clerk, Class B, to perform duty on the Barberton and Pacific R. P. O., between Barberton and Pacific. I entered upon my duties as second clerk on this R. P. O. the next Monday morning, and as I had learned this run I was familiar with it. During the six months I had worked I had learned something of the duties of the letter clerk or clerk in charge, and now took more notice of this, as I might have to fill his place at any time. After I had worked here some time, one Saturday night, when we arrived in Barberton, I was notified the clerk on the Barberton and Pacific R. P. O. on Nos. 24 and 31, being the R. P. O. running opposite to ours, was sick, and that I should report in Pacific the next morning to fill his place. I took the night train out of Barberton for Pacific and arrived in Pacific the next morning. During the day, (Sunday),

I prepared my "slips" for the following week, procured and filled out pouch records. A pouch record is a list of all the postoffices on the line of the R. P. O., at which more than one pouch is delivered or received, and such pouches when delivered or received must at the time of receiving or delivering be checked on such record. The pouch records are sent to the division superintendent. I provided myself with a register book. All registered pieces received by a clerk are entered in a register book, giving the number of the piece, the postoffice to which addressed, and the office of origin. I also procured a supply of register receipt cards. A receipt card is about the size of a postal card, on which the clerk enters the registered piece, the same as in the register book on one side, and writes or prints his name and address on the other side, postmarks it, and ties this on top of the bundle of letters, under the facing slip, which he is to deposit in the pouch for the postoffice for which he has a register, and the postmaster on receiving the register, postmarks the card, signs it and returns it to the clerk. The clerk then checks the register on the register book, as receipted for, and preserves both receipt and book. Registered mail, if there is any for a postoffice, must always be deposited in the pouch just before locking. In dispatching a register to the R. P. O., a postmaster at all, except terminal offices,

follows the same rule, using a different colored card, which the clerk signs and returns. I then obtained some blank trip reports and envelopes. Trip reports are made out in duplicate at the end of each trip, one being sent to the division superintendent and the other retained. On these you give the name of the R. P. O., number of train, direction going, the number of packages of letters cut and worked each way, also the number of sacks of mail opened and distributed, and any and all irregularities that may have occurred on the trip, such as not receiving a pouch that ought to have been received, not delivering a pouch that should have been delivered, carrying mail beyond destination, etc., and the cause of such irregularities. On these is also entered all errors found in distributing the mail that have been made by other clerks or postmasters, by giving this R. P. O. mail that should have been sent elsewhere. This is called "checking." When an error is discovered the clerk takes the slip covering the package or sack and writes on the back "letters," or "papers," as the case may be, the number of pieces and addresses of the same, postmarks it, and sends them to the division superintendent with the daily trip report.

With these supplies, together with my scheme, postal guide, and last monthly correction of the same, I was ready to commence my duties. As there was only one clerk in this R. P. O., it was necessary for me to look after and do everything. On Monday morning, I reported at the postoffice for the registered mail for this R. P. O. After receipting to the register clerk for them, I deposited same in a pouch and locked the pouch, (the registered mail must be carried from the postoffice to R. P. O. and from R. P. O. to the postoffice in locked pouch, and always in the personal care of the clerk. I then "signed out." By this is meant to sign your name in a book kept at the termini of a run, write in the time you arrive at the postoffice, and the time the train leaves and arrives at the depot. Failure to "sign out" or "in" means forfeiture pay for the day, unless excused by the division superintendent. After reading the last official bulletin issued by the general superintendent, showing any changes

that had been made in the scheme and all new orders, I notified the proper party I was ready for the mail which was loaded into a wagon, and, with this, I was driven to the car. I immediately took the mail into the car, checking off the pouches on the pouch record as received, then "slipped" the car. By this is meant to put the labels in the label holders on the sacks and pouches and facing slips in the letter boxes. After this, I entered the registered mail in the register book, stamping each one with my name, date and R. P. O., and made out receipt cards for same and placed them in their proper boxes in the letter case under the facing slip I had already placed therein.

In trying out the letters in a box to be distributed in a pouch, the letters are all taken out of the box at once and the facing slip is on the bottom, and this is taken off and placed on top of the package. This is always done when a box of letters is tied out. Then if the register receipt card is under this in the box, it would be taken off first and this would remind the clerk he had a register for this office. The receipt card is then put on top of this, the letters, the facing slip on top of this, and the bundle tied up. I then changed the dates in the postmarking stamp, this being like the stamps used in P. O. S., except the part that cancels the stamp has the letters R. M. S. The stamp itself has the name of the R. P. O., the date, and number of the train. After examining the catchers to see if they were in proper position, I was ready to begin to work the mail. The initiatory steps in this are dumping the pouches and distributing the direct packages of letters and throwing the working packages on the table in front of the letter case. Only one pouch or sack must be dumped on the table at the same time. The mail contained in the one dumped must be distributed before another is dumped, and every sack and pouch must be examined after dumping to see that no mail is left therein. In distributing the paper mail, I found one piece on which there was no address, and one addressed to a postoffice I could not find in the postal guide, the last monthly correction or scheme. These I

sent to the division superintendent. I received more mail and distributed it, and as it was about twenty minutes before I was due to receive more I locked the car and went to breakfast.

Returning to the car, I received more mail, and five minutes before leaving time I received the last, and in this delivery I was "short" two pouches, one for the Barberton and Pacific R. P. O., and a direct pouch for a R. P. O. I connected with at one of the stations on the line. In the case of the direct pouch I made out a duplicate "shortage slip," stating the reason the pouch was not received, (the train was late), and delivered one of the shortage slips instead of the pouch, and forwarded one to the division superintendent, with the daily report. The failure to receive the pouch for the Barberton and Pacific R. P. O. I noted on the daily report, giving the reason. In case I had not known the cause of failure to receive a pouch, it would have been necessary for me to have telegraphed the fact to the general superintendent, or chief clerk. I distributed this mail and tied out the letter box for the first station, deposited it in the pouch, and locked it just as the train whistled for the station.

This was a "flag station." By this is meant a station where the train stops only on signal, and is therefore a catch station. I passed and served several stations, working the mail as it was put in the car and then came to a station where we connected with another R. P. O.. Here I delivered the mail and received that due me. Then I took all the registered mail I had for that R. P. O. to the car and delivered them personally to the clerk, taking his receipt for same in the register book. Where registered mail can invariably be delivered from hand to hand, hand to hand receipts must be taken. This also being the R. P. O., for which the pouch was short, I delivered the shortage slip instead of the pouch. At nearly every station at which we stopped, a number of uncanceled stamped letters would be dropped in the car door, which I had to pick up, postmark and distribute, and many times some one would come to the car door with a letter and two cents, and want a stamp which I would have to furnish,

as all R. P. O. clerks are required to carry a supply of postage stamps for the accommodation of the public.

After a time, I came to a station which had a letter box for mailing letters. Here I took in and delivered the mail, locked the car door, hurried off to the box, unlocked it, secured the mail, relocked the box and went rapidly back to the car. This mail I had to postmark and distribute, as well as the regular mail received in the pouches and sacks. I have found 200 pieces at one time in these boxes. Then for the first time I noticed we were forty-five minutes late, and that the R. P. O., to which I gave the back mail, would pass the station at which it was designated the back mail should be delivered before we arrived there, and I had to calculate from the time-table where I would pass that R. P. O., providing it was on time. Having determined this, I locked my back mail pouch and delivered it at this station, calling the station agents' attention to it instead of taking it to the designated station. By this time, I had to begin to hang sacks and pouches in the vacant places in the rack caused by those I had taken out. At one station, a gentleman stepped up to the door and said he had just thrown a letter in the car door, and described it, and said he would like to get it back as he had decided not to send it. I refused to give it to him, as a R. P. O. clerk has no right to give back a letter when once mailed in the car, nor has he a right to deliver a letter even to the addressee. That duty belongs to postmasters.

I was now at a point where it was necessary to begin to tie out my letter case, and pull out the remainder of the pouches and sacks, hanging the pouches in front of the rack so that I could finish hanging the rack for the return trip. In tying out a letter case, the direct packages are tied out first. Should there be a box for any R. P. O., and direct boxes for cities served by that R. P. O., the city boxes could be tied out leaving the R. P. O. box, then if any mail was received for these cities it could be put in this R. P. O. box, and that R. P. O. would distribute them when they received the R. P. O. package. Only by learning a run and study-

ing it, can one know where to begin to tie out the letter case and hang the rack, and just what letters to tie out and what sacks to pull out. If there is a pouch or a sack in the rack for the same postoffice or R. P. O., the sack can be taken out of the rack when near the end of the run, or when the most of the mail has been distributed. If any more mail is received for this station it can be deposited in the pouch, as all classes of mail can be put in a pouch. I continued exchanging and working mail until the last station was passed, and, in the meantime, had nearly finished hanging and slipping the car for the return trip. Arriving in Barberton, I delivered the mail, put my register in a pouch, locked it, and went to the postoffice, "signed in" in the book for arrivals and departures, delivered the through registered mail to the register clerk, taking his receipt therefor. The way registers I had delivered to their respective postoffices on the trip.

One-half the day was then over. After eating I went back to the postoffice, procured my registers, and "signed out," and went to the car again. I had about the same experience on my return trip as on my trip out. I failed to "catch" the mail at one station, for the reason I did not get to the door soon enough; it was dark and I did not judge the location of the crane correctly. This irregularity I reported to the division superintendent on the trip report, giving the reasons therefor. All errors, however, are charged up against a clerk's record, unless they are unavoidable. On the return trip, I received a letter with a special stamp upon it. This I back stamped and tied it on top of the bundle, the facing slip so placed that the special delivery stamp was plainly in sight, and one picking up the bundle would at once see it was a special delivery letter. I arrived at Pacific at 9:10 p. m., delivered my mail and took my registers to the postoffice. This completed my day's work.

It was now 10:00 p. m., and I had been on my feet working as hard and fast as I could, since 4:30 a. m., and must do the same thing for five days more before having a rest. Had I been on this run permanently, I would

have received eight days "lay off," or rest, during which time, a clerk is expected to study the scheme and to know all changes that are made, and be prepared to put up two case examinations per year when called upon. This was a fair sample of a railway mail clerks' daily life.

All days, however, are not as easy as the one just described, as very often a clerk will receive more mail than he can distribute, and therefore has to carry mail past its destination, and has to send it back in the back mail, or take it through with him and deliver it to the terminal office, and then it is necessary to report to the division superintendent, the number of pieces carried by. The train may be wrecked, in such case the clerk immediately wires the division superintendent the fact, the condition of the mail, the cause of the wreck and if the clerks are injured. The clerk may be taken sick or be injured to such an extent he is unable to work, in which case he wires the official authorized to fill runs, and a clerk is sent to take his place, but under no circumstances must a clerk leave the mail until another clerk relieves him, and many, many other things arise which require good judgment to decide how to act to best serve the interest of the government.

Take it all in all, to make a good, successful railway postal clerk, one must be strong and robust, well in every particular, fair education, quick in action and thought, and willing to work. Possessed of these qualifications one may become a successful clerk and pass many years in the service.

The experience related above was the actual experience of a clerk on what they call a "side line." By that is meant any R. P. O. except one of the through lines, like the New York and Chicago R. P. O., or New York and Washington R. P. O. On these lines there are full cars devoted to working mail, and also cars to store the mail, called storage cars, but the life of a clerk is about the same on all runs.

In the year ending June 30, 1902, there were 9,485 railway postal clerks employed; nine were killed, 88 seriously injured, and 302 slightly injured. There were,

during the year, about 14,500,000,000 pieces of mail handled.

The above is written for the purpose of giving those who have a desire to enter the Railway Mail Service some idea of what is necessary to pass through in order to become a clerk, and some of the duties of a clerk, after receiving an appointment.

Department of Civil Service.

Catalogue Free on Request. All Courses by Mail.

This is one of the oldest Departments of the College. The object in its establishment was to provide practical courses of instruction for the large number of persons who were each year taking the Civil Service examinations of the United States Government, and the gratifying success which has attended its work is the best evidence that it supplied an urgent need of the hour. The courses of this Department are based upon the examinations given by the Civil Service Commission so that one takes a large number of trial examinations exactly similar to the real one before he comes to the final test. These trial examinations are made up in part of questions which have recently been used by the Commission in its examinations and in part by questions along the same lines prepared by experts. So closely have we followed the work of the Commission that the latter's questions frequently appear in the Government examinations after our students have had them in our lessons. When one of our trial examinations is finished it is sent by the student to the college, where it is criticized by experts and marked and graded exactly as the Government examination will be graded by the Civil Service Commission. The student, in this way, knows what grade he would have made had been this been the real examination. In returning these papers our examiners point out the errors of the student, suggest means of improvement, and enclose the answers in full, worked out in detail exactly as they should be done. This is sent back with other work, which in its turn, will be treated in like manner.

President Roosevelt made some new rules shortly after his inauguration which make it absolutely impossible for any one to secure an appointment in the classified service of the Government without being regularly examined and certified for appointment by the Civil Service Commission. He has also forbidden those in the Government service to use, or attempt to use, the influence of Congressmen to secure promotions or effect legislation on pain of dismissal from the service. All future promotions must be made on merit alone.

AN ARMY OF APPOINTMENTS EACH YEAR.

There were 14,983 appointments made during the year ending June 30, 1902. All appointments are for life, and for most places only a common-school education is required. Politics or religion is not considered. This furnishes a good opportunity for people between 16 and 45 years of age. Examinations are held in the Spring and Fall yearly at several places in each State. There are over 126,000 persons employed in the classified Civil Service of the Government. The Commission makes no charge to those who are examined. It is not necessary to have an extensive education, but it is necessary to know the right things and be perfectly familiar with the technical rules of the Commission. It is no use to pass the examination at a low grade, as competition for most places is quite sharp, and only those who stand well are appointed. If you are interested in positions of this kind, you can get full information about them by writing for our Civil Service Catalogue.

THE COLUMBIAN CORRESPONDENCE COLLEGE,

Washington, D. C.

Department of Law.

Catalogue Free on Request. All Courses by Mail.

The Department of Law is in charge of Hon. Charles A. Ray, LL.D., ex-Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Indiana. Judge Ray is one of the best known law-writers and jurists in the United States, and his personal attention to the courses of our students gives abundant assurance that they are conducted in a manner most profitable to the students. His entire time and attention is given to the work. All work is by mail. The Law Courses are in no way inferior to those given by the best resident universities, and students who graduate from this college are as competent to begin the practice of their profession as are graduates of any university in the country.

The Professional Course covers two years and a post-graduate year. The following subjects are taken up each year as indicated:

The subjects of the professional course are as follows:

FIRST YEAR. Elementary Law, Introductory and First Book of Blackstone's Commentaries, Contracts, Real Property, Agency, Domestic Relations, Torts, Personal Property, Partnership, Bailments, and Carriers.

SECOND YEAR: Bills and Notes, Evidence, Criminal Law, Common Law Pleading, Equity Jurisprudence, Constitutional Law, Equity Pleading, Wills, Administration of Estates, Criminal Procedure.

POST-GRADUATE YEAR: Corporations, Federal jurisprudence, Private International Law, Assignments, Code Pleading, Injunctions, Receivers, Taxation, Extra-

ordinary Legal Remedies, Mortgages, Public International Law.

SPECIAL COURSES. The following are not a part of the regular course, but may be taken if the student desires.

SPECIAL COURSES: Public Officers, Admiralty, Insurance, Mining Law, Copyrights and Trademarks, Patent Law, Pension Law, Science of Jurisprudence.

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THE SYSTEM.

A year's work covers the subjects grouped under that year, but a student may take as much longer to finish as he desires. He may also take the work in less time if he can do it justice, but great haste is not encouraged. At the end of the year an examination is given the student, conducted by some competent person, preferably an attorney, in his own neighborhood, both student and attorney making affidavit that it has been fairly conducted. At the end of the first year a certificate is given showing the work covered. At the end of the second year, the degree of LL.B. is conferred. The tuition is low. It may be paid in installments, which are fully explained in our Law Catalogue.

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